

Mortimer Delmar vol.-1

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The day, which had commenced so auspiciously, had changed for the worse, the sky was now charged by heavy, lurid masses of vapour; and the wind, which at one moment was so still that it scarcely stirred a leaf, at another whistled mournfully among the branches, over the heads of the young men; yet, as soon as the breeze had swept by, the oppression in the atmosphere seemed twofold increased.

"By Jove! Mortimer," said George, starting to his feet as a vivid flash of lightning burst from the portentous cloud, and for an instant seemed to quiver round the tree beneath which they reposed. "I shall be off—trees are not desirable shelter in a storm such as this is likely to be. Are you going to stay here?" he continued, seeing Mortimer did not immediately follow his example.

"I think not, George, I am not quite tired of life yet," replied he, also rising. "I was contemplating the majesty with

which that cloud is rolling towards us. Does it not remind you of the uncontrolled passions of the human breast?"

"At this moment I do not perceive the similitude," returned George, smiling, as they left their dangerous position. "Perhaps you will pity my dullness, and explain the resemblance."

"Why, I argue thus," rejoined Delmar, "that thunder cloud was probably, at its formation, a light fleecy vapour, and, like the mind in childhood, was innocuous. As they each advance in age, however, angry passions in the one, and electricity in the other, take place of original purity, and they proceed on their course, increasing in magnitude, strength, and wickedness, until they occasion their own destruction, and that of every object connected with them."

"Even so, my dear philosopher," returned George, "I did not know you had a taste for moralising."

"It is not inherent, George—considera-

tion on the vanity of projected happiness is the origin of it in me, if I possess any."

"Vanity of a fiddle-stick, Mortimer! which is quite as probable as the vanity of your happiness. Why, I should like to know what young fellow has more reason to be happy than yourself; every thing seems within your grasp; you are exorbitant in your expectations, my friend."

"And yet, George, one thing alone is wanting to make me happy."

"Be assured that one is better not in your possession; do you not know that the most coveted object loses half its value in being attained?"

"So we are told," returned Mortimer, "but all are unwilling to believe it."

"Well! my present wish," said George, as he shook his coat, on which several heavy drops of rain now fell, "is to find some sort of shelter, for we shall be drenched soon. I see the spire of a church behind those trees, so there must be a cottage near. Come on, Delmar."

The storm was now rapidly advancing, the lightning blazed, and the thunder pealed continually, while the rain descended in torrents, as they hastily traversed a field, and turned the corner of a high hedge, where they suddenly came in sight of a small neat dwelling, standing within a short distance of a narrow road. It was partially concealed by the foliage of several chesnut trees, and the rustic entrance was covered by clematis and the scarlet creeper, which climbed up the front of the building, and looked in at every casement. The friends hesitated not to push aside the wicket, and to enter the beautifully kept flower garden ; they paused not, however, to observe its neatness, but hastened to the entrance, where George applied loudly for admission.

“ You make as much noise, George,” said Mortimer, “ as if you were lord of the mansion ; now, I doubt the propriety of intruding here at all.”

"There is no reason to solicit shelter if you be either fire or water proof," returned George laughing; "but as I am flesh and blood, I mean to avail myself of that refuge which chance has thrown in my way." So saying, he addressed the aged female who now opened the door, and requested permission to remain half an hour while the storm lasted.

He had scarcely made his demand, or the woman had time to pronounce the word "Surely," ere a door to the right opened and an old man appeared, who was no sooner informed of the state of the case than he said, as he threw the door wide open, "Come in, come in, gentlemen. Shelter from the rain! to be sure. Heartless must he be who could refuse it at an awful moment like this." Upon this they entered the little sitting - room, where their host introduced them to his grand-daughter, a lovely girl apparently about seventeen.

To a cast of features purely Grecian was

united in her countenance all that could dazzle and delight. Her eye was of that dark, that holy, blue, which when fringed by the lash which may be said to sweep the cheek, almost deepens to a black; and her skin was so delicate and transparent that the clear blue vein might be distinctly seen beneath. In figure, she was so light, so fragile, that, in looking at her, one was reminded of a tender flower, which displays its beauties in the early sunbeams, but which droops and fades beneath the chill evening blast.

For an instant, as the strangers entered, her cheek was suffused by a roseate hue, which might have rivalled the earliest blush of Aurora; but, when Mortimer's gaze of admiration met her sight, it deepened to a crimson, and she turned hastily away to place the old man's chair by the fire. He might have numbered nearly seventy winters, for the few hairs which were scattered over his high and noble forehead, as well

as his brows, were of a snowy whiteness. His features were strongly marked, and there was a severity, a gloom, overspread-ing his countenance, which, unless dispelled by a slight smile of benevolence, gave a forbidding austerity to his appearance. His gait was firm, though somewhat bowed by age, and his bearing and manner courteous.

He begged his guests to be seated, and, after discussing the weather, he informed them that he had been the rector of that parish thirty years, and during that time had only been twice more than fifty miles from his home. "And are you satisfied with such a perfect banishment from all intercourse with the world, such complete oblivion?" asked Mortimer.

"Quite," replied the old man, "the little I have known of that world, my young friend, which is now probably opening before you, dressed in the bright sunshine of expectation, with me has been dimmed by the tears of misery and misfortune; and

happy, thrice happy do I think myself, for being placed by a merciful Creator in a station where I am exempt from some of the miseries to which my less fortunate fellow creatures are subject. Here, in the discharge of my duty and the society of my child, I hope to spend the remnant of my days, far from the troubles of the world!"

" You seem to think, sir," replied young Delmar, " that no pleasure exists save in seclusion; but were you conversant with society, you would own that it, too, had its attractions. Even in the course of the peaceful life you lead here, I dare say you have your anxieties? "

" Doubtless," returned his host; " but they are trifles compared with what others endure, and I am content with every thing around me. Are you able to say the same?"

" I fear not," replied Mortimer; " yet I could never be persuaded that the life of complete retirement is one of happiness.

The stream of existence may flow noiselessly away, and, like a flower of the field, we may droop and die in peace ; but, in my opinion, life was given for enjoyment, and I should be tempted to take the evil with the good."

"Very natural, very natural," returned the old man, "youth, health, and inexperience are yours at present."

"Pray how far are we from Heron Castle ?" interrupted George, who had been caressing a large spaniel which lay before the fire.

"Rather better than five miles by the fields," replied the rector, "which I suppose you will prefer, being the shortest. Is it at Sir George Heron's that you are staying, sir ?"

"That is my name," answered the young baronet. "I and my friend, Mr. Delmar, left home on a shooting expedition this morning, and had sent our servant home with the dogs, when the storm burst,

and we hailed your cottage with pleasure."

" In which, let me assure you, I feel much satisfaction in entertaining you. It is rare that any one, save those who seek spiritual or corporeal aid, come under my roof; and, since the rain seems likely to continue, I hope you will partake our meal, which must now be prepared. Ring, my love," continued he to the young lady, " and we will inquire the cause of the delay." George and Mortimer accepted the invitation, and the new friends were soon seated round the hospitable board of Mr. Vernon, for such was the name of their host. During the repast, they conversed cheerfully on various topics ; George found that Mr. Vernon had been acquainted with his father, and that circumstance created an interest in the mind of each, which afforded a fertile subject for conversation. Mortimer meanwhile found much pleasure in the naïveté of the beautiful

Ellen. Innocent as the infant, which yet lies cradled in its mother's arms, and timid as a fawn, she spoke with an ease which is either the offspring of ignorance of worldly forms, or else of perfect acquaintance with the rules of society. With her the former was, of course, the reason, and, while engaged in talking with her, Mortimer forgot that he had ever felt an emotion of tenderness for Beatrice, or that, even an hour before, he had indulged his bitter reflections on the subject of her coldness. He forgot everything, in short, except the beautiful girl who spoke, and, when she rose and retired from the table, she seemed to carry with her everything that had caused the previous hour to pass so quickly; he, however, joined in the conversation between his friend and Mr. Vernon, for some time, when, the heavens being again clear, Sir George rose to depart. " You will permit me, I hope, Mr. Vernon," he said, " to have the pleasure of

calling on you another day, since my father's friend must be mine also."

"You need scarcely request it, my young friend, since it is I who should feel gratified by the acquaintance; and your friend will also be welcome in my poor dwelling," added the good man, as he turned towards young Delmar, who felt no slight pleasure at thus having the prospect of again seeing the bewitching creature who had bewildered him with her transcendent loveliness. He had no opportunity of seeing her again however, before he left the house, as George, anxious to return home, immediately set off, and hurried the unwilling Mortimer away. After walking half a mile in silence, George exclaimed "Well! Mortimer, what think you of our visit? apparently we have neither been displeased with it!"

"No," said Mortimer, "the refreshment was acceptable, and the old man hospitable."

"Add, also, that the grand-daughter was,

or rather is, beautiful," interrupted George, laughing.

"True, Heron, as beautiful as an angel. She is indeed

A flower not fit to bloom unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

"Yet, Delmar, she will probably bloom where nature placed her, the wife of some farmer, or poor curate, perhaps."

"Thrown away," answered Delmar, thoughtfully.

"Nay, Mortimer, happiness is all she should look for, and a poor, but beautiful, country girl is more likely to find it with such a person than if raised from her obscurity."

"I differ from you, George; such a beautiful being would ornament a throne, and find happiness everywhere with an innocent mind like hers."

"She is an enviable mortal, then," returned the other; "but, whatever may be her attractions, she seems to have spread

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her nets well, since so wary a fellow as you are trapped in them."

"Me! George, me trapped? Can I not admire a girl without being absolutely caught and caged? Nonsense, my heart is as free as it was before."

"Say you so? good Delmar, then I calculate it is wounded in more parts than one."

"What the deuce do you know about my heart, Heron?" returned Mortimer, in a tone of annoyance, while the hot blood was apparent in his cheek, notwithstanding the darkness of his complexion. "I think you will have enough to do to keep your own quarry in view, without troubling your head about me."

"There is some truth in that," said George, changing his tone from gay to grave; "and I wish I may not be baffled in my giddy flight."

The conversation now turned upon other subjects, for neither was willing that the

other should observe his sentiments, yet they felt the secret of each breast had been penetrated by the eye of friendship." An hour more brought them to the castle, where they found the domestic circle increased by a distant relation of Lady Heron. James Houston was the elder son of an eminent banker in London, and, being in his father's house, had obtained a few weeks' holiday. He had devoted this time to travelling among the lakes, and, being so near Heron Castle, had availed himself of the present opportunity of paying a long promised visit to Sir George. He was lively and good tempered, and Lady Heron hoped he would add much to the gaiety of the party during his stay; for she saw, with infinite pain, the constraint which pervaded the conduct of her children and their companions.

During the day, Beatrice and her cousin had been entirely silent on the previous evening's occurrence, but the meeting

between George and the latter, on assembling for dinner, plainly shewed that neither had forgotten it.

"I believe I was too harsh to you last night, Mary," said he in a low tone, holding out his hand to her, as they descended to the dining-room. "I hope you do not bear me any malice?"

"Oh! no," replied she, while her cheek flushed with pleasure. "Only remember not to be so severe in future, as I will not promise to forgive you so readily. Come," continued she gaily, "tell us where you have been during this terrible storm; that you have done the larder good service I already know, since Michael told us he had brought home nine brace of pheasants and three hares."

During dinner, the baronet recounted the day's adventure, and spoke of Mr. Vernon with pleasure, as a person whose friendship he should desire and value; mentioning also the surpassing loveliness

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and elegance of his interesting granddaughter. Poor Beatrice felt her blood curdle as she heard Mortimer join with enthusiasm in praising her, and, when she laid her aching head on her pillow, she was obliged to confess that the pang she then felt was the first approach of the demon of jealousy. From an early age she had been accustomed by her mother to scrutinise her daily actions, and she was therefore not long in detecting the feeling which had just taken root in her heart. Long after Mary had sunk into the arms of Morpheus, she permitted the tear of love, jealousy, and vexation, to moisten her eye; but when she reflected how useless it was to fret, how wrong to indulge such an evil passion, or feel angry with Mortimer for praising a person for whom he might not even be interested, she magnanimously resolved to overcome her feelings and keep her love in subjection. How easy are our plans in theory! and alas! how very diffi-

cult in practice! We forget, in the moment of formation, how rough and tortuous is the path of rectitude; we make no allowance for the tests our virtuous resolutions will have to endure, but often think that in practice we shall not meet with more obstacles than when making them in a moment of tranquillity and repose. Beatrice found the truth of this in the course of the few following weeks: but we must not anticipate.



CHAPTER VI.

Derision sneers upon her birth,
And yields her scarce a name on earth.

BYRON.

MORTIMER's admiration of Ellen Vernon would have attracted him again to Claybrook rectory, on the following day, but as he had no ostensible motive for presenting himself there, without George, who was otherwise engaged, he was obliged to content himself with the hope that he might induce his friend to call upon Mr. Vernon in a few days. He enjoyed a ride with Beatrice and lady Heron, when he found the former more easy and pleasant than he had done for some time, but he took no

advantage of the circumstance, for his thoughts were elsewhere, though his heart was not yet deaf to its first impressions. No, he was not,

A mortal made
Of such quicksilver clay that in his breast
No permanent foundation can be laid.

He loved Beatrice deeply, but finding, or fancying, he found, no sympathy, he placed his admiration upon the nearest attractive object. Should that object return his affection, we would, by no means, say his love was not transferable; and the following pages will show whether his sentiments could be changed. He was enabled to pay his much-wished for visit to Claybrook, soon after; but they found the old man only at home, his grand-daughter being gone to the village school. This was a disappointment, but Mortimer consoled himself in the hope of her return, before George terminated his visit, and it happened fortunately, as he thought, for, just as they rose

to depart, Ellen tripped lightly up the little garden. A few minutes' longer stay, was, of course, necessary, and the incense, during that time, poured upon his rejected affections, conveyed such intoxicating pleasure as to chain him a willing captive at the altar of beauty. Again the image of Beatrice faded from his memory, as he contemplated the charms of Ellen ; and it was with reluctance that he tore himself away and turned homewards with his friend.

Some days passed without any remarkable occurrence ; Delmar found his way to Claybrook several times, deriving much pleasure from his acquaintance with both Mr. Vernon and Ellen ; his spirits returned, and Beatrice saw, with what pain those only can tell, who have seen the heart of one they loved alienated from them, that Mortimer had bestowed those affections she so much coveted upon another.

George again became a prey to jealousy, from his cousin's flirtations with James

Houston, and, in consequence, they preserved a repulsive coldness towards each other; the former from pique, the latter from the expectation that her cousin would yield; but in this she was mistaken, since he was resolved not to give way again. Thus both were made uncomfortable, and George determined to leave home as soon as his friend's visit should be terminated. The heart of that friend was troubled by many contending emotions, which alternately gave him pain and pleasure. Captivated by Ellen, he yet felt the most acute pangs when he thought Beatrice favoured young Houston, whose attentions were obvious. To avoid suffering this, and unwilling also to be at all in her way, he was constantly out walking, or at the rectory, and he congratulated himself upon having mastered his feelings—but it was a false idea, he had only lulled them. One morning that he had been out shooting, he reserved a brace of pheasants to carry to

Claybrook, and after luncheon mounted his horse, and rode, with them in his pocket, towards the village. Before reaching the cottage, however, he perceived Ellen, with her grandfather, walking along the road, and a few minutes' brisk trot brought him up to them. He quickly dismounted, and walked by their side; after having admired and caressed the horse, Ellen took it by the bridle, and amused herself by leading it; while Mortimer regarded her with the deepest admiration, as he offered his arm to Mr. Vernon, who smiled, as he said, "So you desert me, Ellen, for our friend's favourite, but you see, Mr. Delmar takes pity on me."

"I did not intend to desert you, sir," replied she, relinquishing her charge, and coming back to his side, "but you know I love horses so much, and so seldom have the pleasure of finding one so gentle."

"True, my love, or of seeing any one who would be equally complaisant as its

master, you should add, to take your place by my side; therefore make the most of your time, and go back to your pet."

She blushed, as Mortimer again placed the rein which she had relinquished into her hand, saying, "Believe me, Ellen, I envy my horse, which is led by so fair a hand, and on which such tender care is bestowed."

"Fie, Mr. Delmar, how can you envy an animal!"

"Because, I fear it cannot appreciate the value of your kindness: but," said he, taking the game from his pockets, "I can make him grateful, by obliging him to bear these birds home for you. There," he continued, laying them on the saddle, and addressing the unconscious animal, "bear the trophies of your master's prowess to the feet of his friends."

"And did you kill these pretty creatures, Mr. Delmar?" enquired Ellen, "how could you be so cruel!"

"To have the pleasure of presenting them to you and your grandfather, Ellen. But why do you think it cruel?"

"Because, life is so sweet," she replied, while her blue eye was for a moment raised to his, but it again fell quickly, as it met the admiring gaze of the young man.

"Yes," returned he, "but they were given us for food, Ellen."

"True," she replied, "but still they might all live for me. I could not deprive them of life."

"I do not ask you to do that, I only wish you to accept them, which I hope you will not refuse."

"That, I promise you, she will do with great pleasure," said Mr. Vernon, "for she is particularly fond of game."

"Yes, indeed," answered Ellen, "I am much obliged to you for thinking of me."

"That is no obligation," said young Delmar, in a low tone, "it is the balm of my life."

She coloured, and Mr. Vernon, whose deafness prevented him from bearing these words, said, "How hot you look child, are you tired?"

"No, sir, but you must be, for you have had a very long walk. Will you not go in and lie down?" They had by this time reached home, and Mortimer, after staying with them an hour, took his leave.

Three weeks had now elapsed since the accidental introduction to Mr. Vernon; during the last ten days, one had scarcely intervened without Delmar seeing Ellen, and he fancied he could perceive that she met him with more solicitude than at first; he even flattered himself that Mr. Vernon appeared pleased to see him pay her those little attentions which are so grateful from those we love.

About this time, James Houston left the castle, and the parting with all his young relatives was affectionate, but, to Mortimer's jealous eye, that with Beatrice was pecu-

liarly so, and, as she wished him farewell, she placed in his hands a small packet, and, in doing so, Mortimer could not fail to observe the blush which she strove to hide when she saw his eyes fixed upon her; and Houston's words, "I need not repeat, Beatrice, how much it will be valued," did not tend to calm him. With an inward exclamation of impatience, he took his hat, and, with rapid strides, pursued the road to Claybrook. As he walked on, his mind was not inactive; he thought, at first, of Beatrice, of the pleasure he had derived from her society, of her behaviour to him; so unaccountable, yet, perhaps, her hand and heart were plighted to Houston before he ever saw her, and in that case she neither could, nor would, behave otherwise than she had done. "Yes, it must be so, or why should the packet be given and accepted? Then, again it came to his mind that several times, within the last two or three weeks, he had observed she looked

paler than formerly, that her spirits, never excellent, were now much depressed. Had he mistaken her? had he judged her too harshly; and left her for the more beautiful Ellen? No! she had repulsed him before he saw Miss Vernon, or had any opportunity of changing his mind. She forced upon his unwilling mind the conviction that his attentions were *de trop*, and therefore he was perfectly justified in placing his happiness in Ellen's hands. His reflections now took a turn; he feasted on the recollection of the dazzling beauty of this child of solitude, of the perfection of her voice, so soft, so bewitching, and he thought of the innocence of her speech and ideas, so pure, that one she loved might mould her to his will, and make her an angel upon earth. How he could adore and love such a being! How much affection he felt assured he really entertained for her! How often is it that woman is accused of loving power and dominion; and perhaps with

justice, for, sensible of their dependance, their minds soar far beyond physical means; but does not man, vain man! also revel in the superiority which he naturally possesses over the weaker sex? He is weak in his strength, does he not glory and delight in supporting the timid, delicate flower, which clings to him, with far more pleasure than if it gave him no such opportunity of displaying his capability of guarding it? Did not our friend, Mortimer Delmar, feel this? Yes, he persuaded himself he was attached to Ellen Vernon, when his heart was in the possession of another! He was piqued and vexed with Beatrice, Ellen was beautiful, and one over whom he felt he could exert that tender, patronising sway, so gratifying to the nobler part of God's creation; and he thought he should shew the cruel destroyer of his first hopes the little importance of her indifference, by turning to another for the comfort she had denied him; not reflecting that, most pro-

bably, his individual happiness was the greatest sufferer in the transaction.

Thus, by the time he had nearly reached Claybrook, he had made up his mind to speak to Mr. Vernon, that very day, in the presumption that he would instantly close with his earnest request to be permitted to look upon Ellen as his future partner for life. Full of this project, he quickened his pace, and had arrived within a few hundred yards of the cottage, when a qualm of conscience, or secret love, arrested his steps. The form of Beatrice rose in his mind's eye, and seemed to demand his affection. He unconsciously stopped, turned round, and then slowly walked away from the home of her he fancied he loved. "If Mr. Vernon should bless my suit," thought he, "and promise me the hand of his grand-daughter, can I give her my undivided affection? Shall I not be tempted to think more fondly of Beatrice than I ought, as the husband

of another? Had I not better fly from rejection on one hand, and temptation on the other? yet, perhaps, I have led the confiding Ellen to believe I love her. Have I not gone too far to recede? Beatrice cannot feel any attachment for me, and I flatter myself Ellen does, or will soon be induced to return my unbounded love. What a weak fool I am to halt so long between two opinions! Courage, faint-heart! I will instantly seek Mr. Vernon, and open my heart to him. Beautiful Ellen, thou shalt be mine!" He turned hastily, again approached the dwelling which contained his treasure; and entered the familiar parlour, where he had, from the first moment he beheld Ellen, been rivetted with the personal appearance of her, who had diverted his mind from its only real love. The chamber was untenanted, but every thing gave evidence of its having been recently occupied. Work and books lay scattered on the table, a nosegay, Mortimer

had presented to Ellen, was placed in a vase close to her work-box, while a sketch, he had requested her to take for him, still stood in her drawing frame. Every thing he saw he fancied betokened Ellen's affection, and each moment, as it passed heavily, while awaiting her return, seemed interminable. He examined her drawing, raised the flowers, and inhaled their perfume, drummed with his hand upon the table, walked impatiently to the window, and finally left the cottage. As he did so, Mr. Vernon pushed away the wicket, and advanced, with a smile, to greet his visiter.
"Have you long been here, Mr. Delmar?" said he, as they re-entered the house.

"No, sir, but I was disappointed at finding that you and Ellen were from home, since I came expressly to walk with her."

"She is gone to F---- for a few hours, with old Margaret," replied the rector.
"Several things were required for the house, she told me."

“ Why did she not say so yesterday, sir, and I would have taken her there in my phaeton ? ”

“ She did not think of it, most likely, being accustomed to depend upon herself; besides, she would not liked to have troubled you.”

“ It would have been rather a pleasure, than a trouble, Mr. Vernon, and I am sorry I lost the opportunity of shewing her it was so.”

The old man sat down by the parlour fire, and pointed to an opposite chair, of which Delmar took possession, and, after a few minutes’ conversation, Mr. Vernon said, “ You will, perhaps, dine with us to-day? Ellen will be glad to see you,—there are so very few who take the trouble to visit us that I must say your acquaintance gives us both the greatest pleasure.”

“ Such information, sir,” returned Mortimer, “ conveys the utmost gratification to my feelings, since the interest, may I

presume to say, the love of your granddaughter, is the aim of my ambition." His auditor started, but he continued : " Yes, sir, her beauty, her innocence, have made an indelible impression on my heart, and your sanction only is wanting to authorise the avowal of my sentiments. The shortness of our acquaintance may scarcely seem to warrant this declaration, but, from the first instant I beheld the lovely Ellen, I have been a willing captive at her feet." He paused, and Mr. Vernon replied, " I will not say I am surprised, my young friend, at what you tell me ; old as I am, I am not blind to the beauty and excellence of my dear child, yet, I doubt if I ought to permit you to entertain the idea of obtaining her hand. She is young, Mr. Delmar, she is innocent, ignorant of every form and custom of the society to which a union with you would introduce her."

" She would be courted everywhere, sir,"

interrupted Mortimer, "she would enhance the brilliancy of a coronet—she would—"

"Hear me out," interposed the other calmly. "I doubt not you believe, or think you believe, all this, but I have heard you are noble, and Ellen is the child of poverty and oblivion. Your friends, whom you must consult in a degree at least, would look with contempt and scorn upon her; and she would be rendered miserable by the very means you would take to ensure her happiness."

"My friends, Mr. Vernon, cannot, I am persuaded, fail to concur with me. My father has ever been indulgent, and if, sir, you will waive these objections, I have no fear of my suit. Do not annihilate my hopes, when you can by one word make me the happiest mortal breathing."

"Ellen does not know of the honour you intend her, I think?" said Mr. Vernon in an interrogatory tone.

"I have not spoken to her of my ardent

affection, sir, but I have every reason to hope she is not ignorant of it."

"Her feelings must be consulted before I can give my answer definitively, Mr. Delmar, and the accordance of your parent must be free. Do not think me severe or ungrateful for your kindness; believe me, I sincerely thank you for Ellen and myself."

"Permit me also to thank you, sir," returned the young man, "for holding out to me a hope of gaining my desire; I need scarcely say how joyfully I accept the conditions."

At this period of their conversation, to Mortimer's infinite satisfaction, Ellen returned home, and it was with an intoxicating joy that he gazed upon the beauty he now considered his own. With augmented tenderness he met her undisguised delight at seeing him, and he sat down to partake their simple dinner in unalloyed enjoyment. Alas! how short is the season of pleasure! and how severely do we taste the bitter

draught which ever succeeds the transient sweet of life's uncertain cup.

Mortimer passed one "happy hour," and but one! for the dinner was scarcely concluded, ere Mr. Vernon, turning to him as he was speaking with much animation to Ellen, observed, " You said, Mr. Delmar, I think, your father's estates were mostly in the sister Island?"

" I did sir, and it is there that Lord Fitz Eustace is, at the present moment."

" What! who!" exclaimed Mr. Vernon, his usually tranquil countenance assuming almost an agonised expression, " Did I hear aright? what is your father's name?" he added almost fearfully.

" Lord Fitz Eustace," repeated Mortimer with evident surprise. The old man turned pale, and gasped for breath, as he said, " Good God! how inscrutable are thy ways!" then addressing young Delmar, he continued, with a violent effort to speak calmly, " By that name you have harrowed

up my very soul—you have unconsciously torn open wounds, which years of tranquillity had partially closed—you have ruined your own happiness—you have—”

“I, sir—I have done this? What and how do you mean! Why should my father’s name create such a terrible revulsion in your mind?”

“Leave us, my child,” said the rector to Ellen, who instantly obeyed him. “Aye, gaze upon her; it will be the last time she will bless your sight,” pursued he bitterly to Mortimer, who looked aghast, with his eyes fixed upon the retreating girl.

“In Heaven’s name! explain this transport, Mr. Vernon. Tell me what I have done to merit so harsh a sentence?”

“You are innocent, young man; but the sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children, even to the third and fourth generation,” he said solemnly; then, regarding Mortimer with a look of mingled pity and indignation, continued more calmly: “An

explanation is due to you, sir, and as I would fain be just, although the recital of the suffering of by-gone years may deeply wound me; if you will listen, you shall judge if I can consent that the child of crime and misfortune shall be your wife."

Without being able to articulate a word from surprise, the agitated Delmar sat down, and Mr. Vernon pursued in a severe tone, while his features betrayed no slight emotion: "Had I entertained the remotest idea, Mr. Delmar, that you had any affinity with the monster who caused my misery, I should ——"

"Recollect, Mr. Vernon," interrupted the young man with a flushed cheek, "that though you are speaking of one who for aught I know may have injured you, yet his son is your auditor. Spare, therefore, those invectives, which your injuries may dictate, or if such be incompatible with your indignation, allow me to resign my

treasure without the additional pain of hearing a parent reviled."

" You are right, Mr. Delmar," returned the rector more tranquilly, " I will simply relate the circumstance which precludes the possibility of your marrying Ellen; and when you know how nearly you stand related to her, you will be alarmed at the feelings you have ventured to indulge. Heaven blessed me with a son, an only child, on whom I placed my fondest expectations. He was the pride of my life, and I educated him for the mercantile line, not being able to bring him up to the church, as I wished, and a situation in a house of business abroad was obtained for him. He bore a West Indian climate remarkably well, and at the end of ten years his mother and myself had the satisfaction of seeing him for a few months. The years of sorrow which have intervened since that period make me almost forget that such a

season of joy ever existed, and I am tempted almost to doubt whether it be not all a dream. During my Henry's visit he became ardently attached to a second cousin, whose beauty, rather than her good qualities, caught his fancy. She had been wooed by the great and the gay, but, fickle and inconstant, had trifled with all until she unfortunately gave her hand to Henry. It was not an agreeable marriage to me, but his happiness was of the greatest consequence; and I yielded my consent, and in a short time I saw them embark for Barbadoes. At first everything wore a smiling aspect, and I rejoiced in having silenced my forebodings of evil. I heard with pleasure of the birth of a boy, when the accounts became less satisfactory, for the child died at a few months old, and Henry complained of the coquetry and want of affection in his wife. About this period, as I afterwards learnt, they became acquainted with the man whose name I

loathe; he had known Mrs. Vernon before she married, indeed for some time had been dazzled by her beauty; he professed a great friendship for Henry, who, being constantly occupied by his business, was little aware of his real motive for being with Mrs. Vernon. Thus, for months, this man frequented my son's house, solely to gratify his guilty passion for his wife, who, with equal weakness and criminality, continued to see him even after she was aware of his sentiments. At length the signs of their mutual good understanding became apparent to the injured husband, and he demanded satisfaction of his false friend for the loss of his honour. Mrs. Vernon did not wait the ebullition of the storm of my son's indignation, but fled to the arms of her paramour, who was then just a widower. The challenge was accepted, and both the combatants were wounded; but Henry the most severely, and his injuries, added to his grief, reduced him to the brink of the

grave, and for several weeks his life was despaired of. He rallied, however, for a season, and, quitting the scene of his disgrace, returned to his unhappy parents, who had the unspeakable sorrow of seeing him sink into an untimely grave from consumption a few months after his arrival."

Here the old man paused, and Mortimer saw the big tear roll silently over his furrowed cheek. Shocked at the sight of this pungent grief, and pierced to the heart by this sudden and unforeseen destruction of his hopes, Delmar rose, and staggering across the room said, "Pardon me," Mr. Vernon, I have no right or wish to trouble you to say more. I can divine the sequel to your tale, and, seeing the necessity for my departure for ever from this spot, will take my leave."

"Stay, stay," gasped Mr. Vernon, "hear all! little more remains to tell. Stay, Mr. Delmar, I intreat you." Mortimer stopped near the door, and the aged minister con-

tinued, "I will not dwell, sir, upon the agony attendant on the loss of an only child, but will hasten to the conclusion of my misery, which was shortly increased by the death of my beloved wife, to the comfort and support of whom I had ever looked in the hour of trial. She lies in yonder grave yard, beside the son she could not survive, and I was left a hopeless, childless widower!" A deep sigh burst from Mr. Vernon's suffering breast, but he instantly resumed : "A year had scarcely elapsed from the period of this sad event, when I received an imploring letter from my wretched daughter-in-law, informing me that, after having suffered much ill-treatment from him for whom she had sacrificed her happiness, here and hereafter, he had obliged her to leave the West Indies, and she had arrived in London entirely destitute with her infant, whence she had travelled on foot as far as York, intending to throw herself on my clemency. There she had

been taken ill, and assured me she was dying, and conjured me by the charity of my profession to come to the abode where she then was, if only to pardon her crimes. At first I would not consent, I could not resolve to look upon the deluded creature; but at the end of a week I relented, I remembered I was a christian minister, and I determined to fulfil my duty as such. Hastening therefore to York, I discovered the residence of Mrs. Vernon, and I trust I alleviated the pangs of her last hours, though I only arrived two days before her erring spirit winged its way to the regions above. In the most piteous manner she solicited my protection for her child, which I positively refused, desiring her to apply to the author of her ruin, but she protested her intention of leaving it an outcast on the world rather than sue to its inhuman father. In consequence of this determination I promised, yes, solemnly promised when I forgave her,

five minutes before her eyes were closed in death, that I would stand in lieu of a parent to her child, and I have done so. That child, Mr. Delmar, is no other than my Ellen —.”

“ Good God ! ” ejaculated Mortimer in accents of the deepest grief, “ can it be possible ? ”

“ Quite,” replied Mr. Vernon sternly ; it is too true that you love your father’s daughter. Now, farewell for ever, unhappy youth ! Had I earlier known to whom you owed the duty of a son, I might at least have spared you some pain ; but it was not in my power, therefore go. I esteem and pity you, but I contemn and abhor the worker of my misery.”

“ Your esteem, your pity,” said Mortimer bitterly, “ of what value are they to me ? they cannot restore what I have lost. No, keep them both for others more solicitous of such benefits. You cannot wish to bestow either on the offspring of a man you must hate.

I thank you for your courtesy, your candour, and perhaps at a future period I may be able so far to conquer my feelings as to look upon Ellen in her real character, when we may meet again; until then, I leave you and her." He held out his hand, which Mr. Vernon pressed between his, but made no reply. Mortimer then turned and, opening the door, rushed into the garden, where he met Ellen just returning from a walk; he would have passed her, but her soft blue eye beamed full upon him, and her cheek turned pale at his agitated appearance. He stopped almost involuntarily, and taking her hand said in a voice scarcely articulate, "Adieu, Ellen, we must part for ever! may you never know the agony I feel at this moment. Forget that such a being as Mortimer Delmar exists."

"What do you mean, Mr. Delmar?" she said timidly. "What has happened? and why leave us so suddenly?"

"Because fate has separated us for

ever!" he faltered, "and the love I would have offered as a husband must be changed to that of a brother. Beauteous being, farewell!" He pressed her small delicate hand to his lips, indulged in one long, long, look upon the form he must see no more, and, as a crystal drop dimmed the brilliancy of his eye, he pushed aside the gate, and hurried across the fields leading to the castle. Ellen stood a moment, at a loss to account for his behaviour, then entering the room where her grandfather sat, still in a state of great agitation, she inquired with eagerness the cause of their friend's incomprehensible departure.

"He is gone away for ever, my sweet child," said he, kissing her pallid cheek; "you shall some day know the cause of so precipitate a measure."

"Now, dear sir, tell me now;" replied Ellen, her eyes filling with tears. "He told me I should see him no more; is that indeed true?"

" Too true. I hope, if he values his own happiness, he will never visit us again."

" But if he values mine, he will," replied the distressed Ellen.

" Say not so, my love, it cannot be ; you must forget him : but where did you see him ?"

" In the garden, sir, but it was only for an instant ; he said something about a brother's love, and then he bade me forget him ; but that, indeed, sir, I cannot do."

" Alas ! alas ! Ellen, I fear the venom of love has taken root in your innocent heart. Come and sit down here. Do not fret, my child, and I will shew you that Mr. Delmar has acted nobly and well in flying from a place which has turned his cup of love to gall."

Ellen shook her head, without speaking, but she sat down, and Mr. Vernon taking her passive hand said, " My loved Ellen, you must arm yourself with fortitude to hear what I have to disclose. As yet, I

have carefully averted every pang, every breath, which could convey anxiety to your tender mind ; but since Heaven has willed, my love, that we should unconsciously have met with one who, however he may merit, must not possess your affections, I am unwillingly compelled to make you acquainted with some circumstances of your birth, which, from their painful nature, I would still have concealed from you. Had I known the title of Mr. Delmar's father, I would not have permitted him to risk your and his own happiness by giving him access to my house. Your mother, Ellen, was the wife of my son, and you have ever been taught to believe, or rather encouraged in the innocent deception, that, in mourning over his tomb, you mourned a parent ; but the mist must now be dispelled, and you must know that Henry Vernon fell by the hand of your father—the seducer of your unhappy mother!—and it was in her last illness, when abandoned by him, that I

consented to take care of you. I resolved nothing short of obligation should induce me to reveal to you to whom you owed your existence, but the time has unexpectedly arrived, and I must crush your affection for Mr. Delmar in the bud, by informing you that Lord Fitz-Eustace possesses the right of a father over you both; and our young friend spoke true in saying he had only a brother's love to offer." A deep sigh escaped from Ellen's oppressed heart, and the tears which, from her intense interest in what Mr. Vernon related, had ceased to flow, again trickled fast but silently down her cheek, and, throwing herself into his paternal arms she sobbed bitterly for a few minutes.

"Do not, my dear Ellen," gently remonstrated the old man, not a little pained at her distress, "do not give way to sorrow for what cannot be avoided. Your condition is not worse than it was, and you have hitherto been contented with the protector Heaven has given you."

"And shall ever be, my dearest sir," said Ellen, smiling affectionately through her tears. "All my gratitude, all my best affections are yours, but I must love Mr. Delmar,—but only as a brother," she added, seeing the shade of disapproval which flitted over Mr. Vernon's face. "Oh! why, sir, did you send him away? I might have testified how tenderly I could return a brother's love. Can you not send to him?" Then, starting as if a sudden thought struck her, her countenance fell, and she continued, "But, alas! I forget what an outcast I am—no doubt he as earnestly wishes, as I must endeavour, to forget that I am his sister, a spurious branch of the parent tree. Oh! my only friend, teach me to forget everything but your goodness, and I shall again be as happy, as contented, as before this unfortunate, but delusive acquaintance. I will love his memory, and so school my heart that, if ever we should meet in future, I may behave as my duty will dictate." She spoke with an energy scarcely to be

expected from one so gentle, and Mr. Vernon regarded her with pride and satisfaction, as he assured her she had by such a determination fulfilled his expectations of her virtuous resolves, and entreated her to persevere in it; then seeing the weight which still hung over her, he added, "Retire to your room, my child, and address yourself to the Power above, who is both able and willing to assist those who call upon Him faithfully. I also will seek that consolation and composure which this occurrence has deprived me of." He laid his hand tenderly on the head of the fair girl, who in a few minutes found herself in the privacy of her own chamber, where, throwing herself on her knees by the side of her modest couch, and burying her face in the bed clothes, she wept a parent's crime, and her own unfortunate affection.

CHAPTER VII.

Alas ! how light a cause may move
Dissension between hearts that love !
Hearts that the world in vain had tried,
And sorrow but more closely tied ;
That stood the storm when waves were rough,
Yet in a sunny hour fall off,
Like ships that have gone down at sea,
When heav'n was all tranquillity !

MOORE.

MORTIMER DELMAR pursued his way almost at a short run for some distance, as if anxious, by bodily exertion, to silence the demon of reflection ; but, as he proceeded, his pace slackened by degrees, and thought resumed its empire. He could scarcely persuade himself what he had heard was not a dream ; one hour before, and he had been

at the acmé of his wishes, the successful lover of a beautiful girl ; but now—how changed his feelings ! At one fell swoop he had been deprived of all hope of securing her to himself, by an acquaintance with a parent's villany, a father for whom he had hitherto entertained the highest respect. How could he, after hearing the pitiable tale, and loving the innocent victim of his crime, entertain the same sentiments ! How could he forget that the lovely Ellen had been cast destitute on the world by a nobleman, enjoying thousands per annum ! As these distressing ideas crossed the mirror of his mind, suddenly he started and asked himself if it were not possible that Mr. Vernon might have told him this story as a prétext to get rid of him ; but when he recollect ed the sanctity of the old man's character, his tears, and just indignation, he banished the unworthy thought, while his cheek glowed with generous shame. " No," said he, mentally, " I can-

not believe evil of Claybrook,—but then my father,—good heavens! I must leave this place, or I know not what I may be driven to. Evil was the hour in which I consented to visit it."

Heron Castle was now close at hand, but he could not make up his mind to enter it, and he wandered about an hour longer, although it was quite dark, and the frosty air swept bitingly past him. After a while, however, the moon looked out from behind a cloud, shedding her mild beams on all around, and, one by one, the stars began to twinkle, and as Mortimer stood beneath the castle porch, and contemplated the vast canopy of heaven, with its thousand gems, his mind became more tranquil, and in a few minutes he turned, and, entering the dwelling, went to his room, whence, having arranged his toilet, he descended to the drawing-room.

"I hope you have dined, Mortimer," said Sir George, as he entered, "for we did not

wait for you, fancying you might prolong your visit at Claybrook till a late hour. How is my good old friend to-day? I think I will go with you next time you walk that way."

"I fear your visit will not be a hasty one, if you wait for me," returned his friend, "as I have this day taken leave of the Vernons, for I am under the necessity of leaving you the day after to-morrow, at farthest; since I scarcely think it would be prudent to defer taking my sister across the water when the season is farther advanced."

"And must you really go to Ireland?"

"Yes, indeed, George, I cannot avoid it."

"If such be the case, Mr. Delmar," said Lady Heron, "we must say no more, as a longer stay might endanger your passage; therefore we can only say how happy we shall be, at any future time, to renew our acquaintance." Delmar acknowledged the kindness he had received, and assured her

that nothing but absolute expediency could take him away so suddenly.

At this announcement of his immediate departure, Beatrice felt a pang within her heart, which warned her the affection she had endeavoured to smother was still uneradicated. She now felt convinced he entertained no real preference for her, since he had been so constantly at Mr. Vernon's, where, she had no doubt, he had deposited his love. She had heard both him and her brother extol the beauty, the fascination of Ellen, and she was convinced she had robbed her of the attachment of a man to whom she could have voluntarily given her heart. From the moment, however, she thought he preferred another to her, her reserve had worn away, and had Mortimer not been blinded, he might, at times, have detected the signs of disappointment in her pallid cheek, and silent behaviour. She, nevertheless, strove to conceal her chagrin, and flattered herself she had succeeded;

but her mother,—where will not a mother's eye penetrate! her mother had observed the struggle which existed in her daughter's breast, and, with a parent's tenderness, she pitied, without the possibility of being able to relieve her.

In Mortimer, Lady Heron saw nothing to object to, as the husband of Beatrice, and, when she detected the growing partiality between them, she inwardly rejoiced at it. It may be easily supposed, therefore, that she participated in Beatrice's concern at the unfortunate light in which Mortimer had viewed her conduct. Lady Heron had never spoken to her daughter on the subject, having entire confidence that her strength of mind would enable her to overcome her injured feelings. Of George she could not be so sanguine, he had, apparently, not forgiven his cousin her little follies, for, although he now spoke to her as usual, there was no longer that affectionate kindness in his manner which he

had formerly evinced, and, whenever his mother had attempted to remonstrate with him, he had declined entering upon the subject; and the high-spirited Mary, though feeling his neglect keenly, had resisted every persuasion, from Beatrice and her aunt, to conciliate him.

This was the state of the party at the time that Mortimer announced his intention of quitting England immediately.

"Well, Mortimer," said his friend, "I did not expect to lose you so soon, but as my mother says, I must not think of risking your safety for my gratification, therefore I shall only say, if you are inclined for a continental tour in the spring, I shall be most happy to be your compagnon de voyage."

"The continent, my dear George!" said his mother, in surprise. "Surely this is only a momentary fancy, and you will not leave us while there is so much to do on your different estates."

"It is my intention to be in Paris in less than a fortnight from this time, mother," he replied, in a ~~softened~~ tone. "And, if you will say," he continued, to Mortimer, "whether you will accept my proposal, I shall have additional pleasure in contemplating an Italian tour."

"There is no one I should prefer to yourself, George," answered Delmar, "but if my father does not particularly object, I propose going immediately across the channel, after I have placed Maria under his protection, and, if you really mean to go to France directly, I will join you, anywhere you may appoint."

"Bravo! Mortimer, in that case we can winter in the south of France, and commence our journey at pleasure."

"Why not stay with us through the winter, George?" said Beatrice, gently. "You know not what comfort your presence diffuses, particularly to my mother."

"Oh! because I hate an English winter,

Beatrice, with its frosts and fogs, besides, I cannot always be tied to home. I must please myself, as well as you, sometimes."

Beatrice was silenced, but Lady Heron said, "I hope you will change your mind, shortly, George."

"If I alter at all, mother, it must be very shortly, since I go when Delmar does."

The conversation was here dropped, and the evening passed much as usual.

"Let me persuade you, Heron," said Mortimer, as they were walking out together the next morning, "let me persuade you to stay here some time longer, as your friends seem to wish it; I will, in that case, stay in Ireland until the spring."

"Impossible," returned George, "I cannot, and will not, remain here. You know the cause of my leaving too well to be surprised at my determination, but I confess I am astonished at your intention of absenting yourself from this country, when,

to all appearance, you are so strongly attached."

"George," interrupted the other, gravely, "you, doubtless, have had occasion to form your own conclusions, on the subject of my repeated visits to Mr. Vernon, and I will own your suspicions were not without foundation, but I laboured under a deception. The scales have now fallen from my eyes, and I discovered yesterday that Ellen is not Mr. Vernon's granddaughter; and that an insurmountable barrier, of a private nature, must for ever separate our families." He paused, and for a few moments a heavy frown, indicative of inward pain at a recurrence to the subject, sat upon his countenance.

"I need scarcely tell you, Delmar," said the baronet, "how truly I sympathise with you; and I am more fully determined than before to accompany you abroad directly. I have ordered every preparation to be made for setting off to-morrow, but you

have never told me your plan. Will your sister travel in the phaeton ? ”

“ Till we reach London, where I intend to go on board a steamer for Dublin, where my father’s carriage will meet us. If you like, I will drive you as far as Nottingham, whence you may reach London by coach ; and I would suggest a trip to my Father land, where we might take ship for a French seaport at our pleasure.”

“ Capital, Delmar ! quite capital ! Let it be settled so, if you please ; the plan has my entire approbation : did you not say you would start at ten to-morrow ? ”

“ Yes, but here comes Lady Heron, no doubt uneasy at your being away from her so long the last day of your stay.”

It was as Mortimer concluded, for her ladyship, having learned that her son had been giving various directions relative to a removal to his servant, came to endeavour again to deter him from his purpose, but all her arguments proved abortive, and he said,

at length, in a firm, but affectionate, tone,
“ Do not continue, my dear mother, to distress both yourself and me by pressing me farther on a point I cannot concede. Mary has so ill requited the affection I proffered her that however much I may still love her, I can no longer deem it prudent to trust the happiness of my life on the cast of a die, when I have seen that the attention of any one can draw her away, and that her taste for flirtation induces her to forget that others can feel though she cannot. No, mother! I must go away, and forget she is aught but my cousin.”

“ Well,” said Lady Heron, “ I find I must yield; your complaints are partly just, but you should recollect that Mary’s errors proceed rather from thoughtlessness than any willingness to offend, and you must make allowances for her youth, and I think, my dear George, you have followed a harsh plan, which has injured your cause.”

“ May be so, mother, but it is too late

now. By the time I return she will have learned to know my value, or I may have discovered the superlative virtues of a more constant heart. You have often said 'Look before you leap, George,' and in this instance I have done so. I see nothing but pain to both, if she should behave as she has done. Would that she resembled Beatrice! she would not intentionally injure a fly."

" You have vanquished me entirely, George; when a young man suffers himself to draw comparisons unsavourable to the person he fancies he loves, it is time he should cease to think of her as a partner for life; and I hope this temporary absence may be of advantage to both you and Mary."

" I hope so also, mother. Helloa! Mortimer," he continued, turning round and seeing his friend considerably in the rear, " are you inclined to join company, and go with us to the farm? I suppose M'Pherson

will expect me to see him before I go," he added to Lady Heron, as Mortimer approached them.

"Certainly, my dear, and the gamekeepers also." Upon this they continued their walk, and Sir George found ample employment for the afternoon in seeing his several out-door servants. The evening was spent cheerfully, even more so than many preceding, for George was no longer annoyed by the presence of young Houston, with whom Mary had trifled—while she, pained, though unwilling to confess it, by his approaching departure, was more solicitous to gratify him; and Mortimer and Beatrice, still drawn together by an imperceptible tie, mutually, but unconsciously, assumed a tone of greater kindness towards each other.

As Lady Heron sat in her easy chair by the fire, assiduously knitting, while her young companions were assembled round Mary's harp, her eyes overflowed with tears

as she thought of the thorn which rankled in each bosom, and their merry laugh sounded as hollow to her ear as she feared it really was. More than one of the party retired with a smile on their lip, but sorrow in their heart, for they knew that they should probably not meet again for many months, supposing, indeed, they were ever permitted to do so; and neither Beatrice nor her cousin felt inclined to court repose on entering their bed-room. The former drew her chair close to the fire, which threw its grateful warmth around, and, taking up a devotional volume, bent her eyes upon the consolatory page. Mary, at the same time, noiselessly drew aside the window curtain, and, after gazing for a few minutes through the window, she opened the casement, and, leaning on the sill, looked forth upon the night. There was scarcely a breath of air, yet the atmosphere was chill, owing to a slight frost, and she shuddered as she felt its influence,

The moon had not yet risen, but the vault of Heaven was spangled with innumerable stars, whose light partially revealed the outline of the shrubs which grew immediately on the velvet turf of the lawn; while the woods in the vicinity appeared in still darker gloom, and no sound was heard save the deep tones of the watch-dog, as he responded to the voice of a companion at a distance.

As Mary stood some moments lost in thought, calmly retracing the past, and perhaps striving to pierce the density of the future, which, like the scene before her, only permitted the certainty of George's immediate removal to rise in the mirror of her mind, while uncertainty filled the space beyond, drop after drop fell unheeded from her eye, and her heavy breathing told of a troubled spirit."

"Dear Mary," said the soft voice of her cousin, as she laid her hand on her arm, "Come away from the window, it is too cold for you to stand there so long."

Mary started, "Too cold, Beatrice!" I found the room very hot just now, but if it be too cold for you, I can close the casement. There! it is done, now let us to bed. I fancied you asleep long since. What have you been doing?"

"That which would ease your mind, as it has done mine," replied Beatrice, laying her hand on the book.

"I could not read," answered Mary, turning to the fire, on which she gazed an instant, and then continued:

"Study requires a quiet mind, and mine is glowing like a furnace. I did not think George would have treated me so ill."

"I fear you must blame yourself, Mary, for the resolution he has taken. He loved you too well to pain you until he felt your unkindness."

"I know I shall not find any consolation in you or my aunt," returned Mary; "therefore I need not expect it. I dare say it is in consequence of your persuasions he is going away."

"Fie, cousin! you heard how strenuously my mother urged him to remain. We ought rather to reproach you for depriving us of his society."

Mary made no reply to this just remark, but soon after, with her companion, was endeavouring to court that temporary forgetfulness which sleep affords. Morning dawned ere either had closed their eyes, and languor, consequent upon broken rest, was visible on their countenances when they descended to the morning repast.

George evidently assumed an indifference he did not feel, while the warm-hearted Mary tried in vain wholly to arrest those tears which had been unstaunch'd for some hours. If George only looked at her, her eyes were suffused, and, unable at length to contain herself, she left the apartment.

"Go to her, George," said his mother compassionating her distress. "You should

pour some balm into the wounds you have inflicted."

"Not yet, not yet, mother, I hate scenes, and I am sure, by her manner, her proud spirit is laid low. I shall not alter my determination; therefore, it is useless to see her half an hour before we start."

Breakfast concluded, George sought his cousin, but not with the light step of pleasure; he felt unwilling to encounter the burst of grief and contrition which he was aware was in store for him. Men, in general, shrink from female sorrow, they can face the appearance of pain, misery, and death in any shape, better far better than—

A tear in woman's eye,
particularly if she be one for whom they have a tender feeling. What mischief has not this silent token of overwhelming power caused in the world, and against which few are proof!

George was sensible of his weakness, but he resolved to be firm, and prepared

himself for a severe attack upon his injured affection. "Mary," he said on entering the library where she was sitting, "Mary, I am come to wish you good bye, as the phaeton will be round directly."

"And are you indeed going, George?" said she, reproachfully.

"Certainly, you know I never change my purpose. I do not wish to hurt your feelings, or your pride, but, as the cousin and friend you will ever find me, I would recommend you to be more careful in playing your next game, for it is dangerous tampering with affection."

"Dear George," replied she, taking his hand, while the tears started into her eyes, "I feel you expect justly, that I should make some atonement for my inconsiderate and unkind behaviour to you. To extenuate it I will not attempt, although I might, perhaps, complain of your severity. But, on the eve of separation, my proud spirit, George, is beaten down, and, if you

will forgive me, I shall be better able to endure your absence, which will otherwise be insupportable. I feel I must not repine at the punishment, but, indeed, I shall find it very difficult to bear." She hid her face in her handkerchief and sobbed aloud.

"I freely forgive you, my dear cousin," said George, affectionately kissing her, "we have each erred, therefore need mutual pardon. But I wish you to consider yourself perfectly free from this moment; after what has passed, whatever bond may have appeared to subsist between us must be dissolved; and our hands, if not our hearts, be left at our own disposal."

"I will not accept your pardon on such terms," rejoined Mary. "You are cruel to ask it, George."

"It is indispensable for our happiness, or I would not urge it. I know not how long I may be away, and, neither for your sake, nor my own, can I consent to deceive

you by allowing you to believe any engagement subsists between us."

"Then, George, you are still displeased, and if my love be so unwelcome, it shall be withdrawn." She spoke with difficulty, then placing one hand over her eyes as if to avoid seeing his departure, she held out the other, saying, "Farewell, George, a cousin's good wishes will attend you, and, if possible, I will forget I once loved you."

"It shall not be obliterated from my mind, dear Mary. The day may come that I shall be happy here, but now it is impossible. Write to me, my cousin, promise that."

She bent her head, and, after once more pressing her hand kindly, George left her. Another moment found him in the breakfast parlour, where his friend awaited him equipped for immediate departure.

"One instant, Mortimer," he said, as his fond mother drew him aside to inquire in what manner he had left his cousin; and to enjoin him once more, for her sake, to re-

member the term of her life could not be long, and that she should anxiously look for his return. "Be assured, my ever dear mother, you shall find me by your side as soon as it is possible; and, as to Mary, I hope I have not been too harsh, but our attachment is certainly for the present destroyed. Ask me no farther, I entreat you." Seeing her about to speak—"I will explain all when I write." The parting was soon over, for neither wished to prolong it, and the mother and son walked together to the house door, where stood Delmar prepared to mount the carriage. "Get up, George, I have forgotten to wish your sister good morning." So saying, he hastily crossed the hall, and found Beatrice standing in tears near the window. He started at her appearance, not that he was surprised to see her grieve for the loss of her brother, but because her pale cheek was now crimson; and her eye beamed momentarily with satisfaction on his entrance.

"Is all ready, Mr. Delmar?" she inquired with that self-possession, which a female frequently preserves in a greater degree than those of the opposite sex.

"It is, Miss Heron, and I am come to take my leave of you, to thank you for your kindness, and to hope," he added in a lower tone, "ere long we may meet again."

She cordially gave her hand, as she replied "We are ever happy, Mr. Delmar, to see my brother's friends, and, if your visit has given you pleasure, I am glad our endeavours have been successful." She looked kindly, almost tenderly, at him; and for days, weeks, and months, Mortimer remembered the peculiarity of that mild, yet he fancied half reproachful, glance; but at that moment he heard himself called by the impatient Heron, and with a hasty bow he quitted the house, where he was newly awakened to the idea that he had permitted

his diffidence to misguide him, and he was partly inclined to fancy Beatrice, the gentle, unassuming Beatrice, loved him."

CHAPTER VIII.

But why so short is love's delighted hour ?
Why fades the dew on Beauty's sweetest flow'r ?
Why can no hymned charm of music head
The sleepless woes impassioned spirits feel ?
Can fancy's fairy hands no veil create
To hide the sad realities of fate ?

CAMPBELL.

BUT we seem to have forgotten Merton Hall and its inmates. Charles Hamilton had been convinced by the events of the day, and the manner of Sinclair at the archery ball, that he aspired to the affection of Maria ; and, like the child who, being in possession of a valuable toy, disregards its enjoyment, but should he see it usurped by a companion, is instantly seized with a

strong desire for that peculiar amusement, so Charles redoubled his endeavours of pleasing the young heiress. Her visit had already lasted two months, and she daily expected to be summoned by her brother to join Lord Fitz Eustace; her tardy lover knew that his father was extremely anxious about the connection, although, in accordance with his promise, he had not spoken on the subject for some time. Having no attachment, Charles was less disposed to oppose Mr. Hamilton's wish; and, when he thought he perceived she favoured the young officer, he felt a desire to rival him, which he fancied was the first advance of love. He was aware she had never encouraged him; but he also knew that her father was resolute in his intention of her being united to a man of family. Sinclair was unable to shew that he was descended by a long line of titled ancestors from the Scottish kings, as he could; and he began to think he liked the society of Maria better upon

farther acquaintance. But we must now return to our friend Frederic, whom we left asleep some pages back.

The hall again became his favourite haunt, for some days, and the flame, which he had struggled for a moment to extinguish, again overcame his prudence, and he sunk, without hope of redemption, into the toils of Cupid.

Maria was ever delightful, ever kind, and he hoped and believed his passion was understood and returned; but he dared not think of Lord Fitz Eustace's opposition, which, conscience whispered, would, sooner or later, annul his dream of happiness. From this state of mind he was aroused, by his regiment being ordered to a distant town, and he saw immediately into what a painful situation he had brought himself for want of a resolute adherence to his prudential measures.

With a melancholy feeling, he set off for the residence of Mr. Hamilton, to inform

his friends of his speedy change of station ; some of whom, he foresaw, far from sympathising with him, would rejoice at his absence. As he rode along, he could not fail to feel and reprehend his own conduct,—he had discovered the danger of involving both Maria and himself in hopeless love, in time to have resisted its insinuating attacks,—he had heard of the improbability of his attainment of the prize,—he knew he was destitute of the means of maintaining her as he would wish his wife to be,—that she was placed, by fortune, in a rank above that in which he had any right to look for a partner,—poor and unknown as he was ; and he was also acquainted with the fact of her being sought by another, who possessed several of these requisites ; yet he had weakly, cruelly, and even culpably, suffered himself to be deluded by the charms of her society, until he saw himself on the verge of a precipice, from which an effort must

be made to preserve himself, and where also, he had every reason to fear he had already drawn the object of his affection, since he had little room to doubt she loved him. Yet every motive of duty, honour, and prudence, forbade him to declare himself, as no hope existed of a fortunate issue to his love. He saw, clearly, the course he ought to pursue,—that of quitting her

At once—for all—and ever;—

without breathing a word of his sentiments for her, and thus, by one vigorous action, save himself from utter destruction, at the expense of a wounded heart, to which, however, the conviction of having acted conscientiously, he hoped, would impart a comfort that would enable him to support the grief of being thought a deceiver. Then came the stunning question, must he leave her unprotected on its brink? The answer succeeded, that he had no means of saving her from the dangerous situation in which

he had placed her, and he cursed himself as the author of her fate !

Sinclair, although at times drawn into error from too great an easiness of temper, had yet a strong sense of rectitude, and now, deeply pained at conduct of which he saw the guilt, he formed the resolution of seeing his adored Maria, for the last time, to repair, if he could not avert, the mischief he had done, and to banish himself for ever from the presence of a being, with whom he felt, to use a metaphor, he could have been happy in a desert. Armed with this intention, he had nearly reached Merton, when he met Mr. Hamilton, Charles, and several ladies on horseback ; he was invited to accompany them, but he declined, urging the necessity of seeing Mrs. Hamilton before his departure, and briefly informing them of the cause of his visit, left them, to hurry towards the house. To one on such intimate terms with the family, it was no difficult task to gain admittance,

had he demanded it, but he unhesitatingly took his horse to the stable, and walked into the house, where, learning from a servant, on his way to the drawing-room, that his lady was in the park, he passed through the garden door and stepped quickly across the lawn. On turning into a path round a holly bush, he suddenly met Maria, who started with surprise, at his appearance. "You seem in great haste, captain Sinclair," she said, with a smile, "had I been a yard in advance, one of us must infallibly have been brought rather nearer the earth than might have been agreeable, and I, as the weaker vessel, should probably have been the one to bend, if not break."

"I must pray your forgiveness, if I alarmed you, Miss Delmar," replied Frederic. "I did not expect to meet you in this spot. I was informed at the house you were down in the park."

"You heard correctly, Mrs. Hamilton is

still there, but I, being fatigued, am on my way to the house."

" You will, I hope, allow me to return with you," offering her his arm as he spoke.

" Oh ! indeed, I will not trouble you, I have not far to go now."

" You must permit me to attend you, since it is my last visit here."

" Your last visit ! Are you going to leave Nottingham, then ?"

" Yes, immediately, I am sorry to say. The regiment is ordered into the West of England, to be at hand in case of disturbances, which are dreaded."

" This is very unexpected, is it not ?" enquired Maria, in a slightly tremulous voice.

" Extremely so, but, however much unforeseen; or unpleasant, to many of us who have friends and acquaintance here, you, doubtless, know

That the king commands, and we'll obey,
Over the hills and far away.

"It is well, captain Sinclair, you can so easily reconcile your mind to fresh scenes and faces. I have always heard that gentlemen of your profession feel less than others the tearing asunder of friendly ties."

"And do you credit an assertion, Miss Delmar, so unfavourable to us?"

"I have never thought upon the subject, but your apparent nonchalance made me think of what I had always been told."

The young dragoon saw what a dangerous situation he was placed in; he was tempted to combat her opinion by opening his whole heart to her, and declaring how highly he prized her friendship, or rather her love—to point out his utter hopelessness, but his better judgment told him how cruel such a course would be, and he struggled to repress the tenderness which swelled his heart.

"Perhaps," he rejoined, "I have less reason than others to repine at the change,

since I shall be within a few miles of an affectionate mother."

"That is a friend whose value I never knew, but I can easily suppose that circumstances must completely supersede the pain of parting with friends of a month's, or even longer, acquaintance. But I will no longer detain you now we are at the house; I think you will find Mrs. Hamilton walking in the grove." She turned, and entering one of the rooms by a glass door, vanished from his sight. After seeking, in vain, during half an hour, for the good lady of Merton Hall, he was returning past the window of a small room, seldom used by the family, and there sat Maria, supporting her head with her hands, while the tears fell fast upon the book she read, or rather tried to read. It was a dangerous moment, to hesitate was to be vanquished, he made one step forwards, with the intention of avoiding temptation, then unconsciously stopped, and gazed upon her

with that intensity which is known only to those who love with the fervour which rivals

The lava's flood.

"Guide me, heaven!" he ejaculated, as he again endeavoured to pass the window. She started, raised her head, and the die was cast—laying his hand hesitatingly on the handle of the window, which opened down to the ground, he paused a moment, before he entered. The painful situation into which he was going to thrust himself flashed before him, but he recollect ed that he must take leave of her, and the sooner it was done the better; he therefore advanced into the apartment, saying, "My search, Miss Delmar, has been unsuccessful, and, since I am under the necessity of returning to Nottingham, I must request you to make my adieu to Mrs. Hamilton and her daughters."

"Can you really not stay until she returns?" said Maria, rising, "she cannot now be long."

"I am sorry it cannot be, Miss Delmar, and that I must also take leave of you. Be assured your kindness will never be effaced from my mind. You said, just now, that we military men have no permanent friendships; but I entreat you to believe my sentiments for you will be an exception to that rule."

"Who would own it, captain Sinclair? Not any one, surely, who wished to be thought well off, which I suppose you do."

"Certainly," he replied, "I believe that feeling is natural to the human breast." Then, finding that his determination was sustaining a severe struggle with his love, he added, abruptly, "but I must trust my character in your hands, confident it cannot be in kinder, and wish you good morning."

Oh! how his blood boiled as he pressed the hand she gave him fervently to his lips; it was deadly cold, and her cheek had lost its bloom, but she said, calmly,

" You have my best wishes for your health and happiness, captain Sinclair; and you may leave me to make your excuses to Mrs. Hamilton, in perfect security."

" I know you are ever good," he replied, with a bow, as he bade her farewell; then turning, left the room. He stayed only to leave his card for Mrs. Hamilton, then mounting his horse, galloped home, where, as he reflected on the past, he congratulated himself for his decision. " Never having declared my love," thought he, " she will soon forget the heartless Sinclair, and, by my forbearance, I have, at least, spared her the recital of my hopeless passion. Though she may class me with those selfish beings, who only look to their own pleasure in seeking the love of a fond girl, yet that is better than entailing the displeasure of a parent upon her." Soothed by the conviction of having done his duty to her and himself, he left Nottingham more happy than he had expected; but months

could not wholly eradicate the impression which had been made upon his heart, or the thorn be extracted which he had implanted in his own breast.

When Maria found herself alone, she sank into a chair, and pressed her clasped hands tightly over her eyes, for some minutes, as if to exclude all recollection of the scene which had just taken place, then, rising, she closed the window ; but that action, trifling in itself, was too much for her overstrained feelings. The image of him who had so lately entered by it rose before her, and she burst into tears, which for some time flowed uncontrolled. "How weak and foolish I am," thought she, "to suffer myself to be thus overcome. It is true, I fancied he loved me, and yet he has left me, as if I were perfectly indifferent to him. His attentions have been so great that I hoped I had not been deceived in returning him the affection he evidently sought, and this is my reward—

to be left at a moment's notice, without one word of kindness." Grief again resumed dominion over her mind, but she shook it off when she recollect ed that his forbearance had perhaps been dictated by his unwillingness to declare himself on the eve of a necessary separation.

"He will undoubtedly return," she said to herself, as her eyes beamed through her tears with love and hope. "He looked so kind, so sad, on leaving me, that I am sure he will not play me false." Cheered by this reflection, she turned a deaf ear to the tales she had so frequently heard of those whose hearts, having been won by the insinuating attentions of young and thoughtless men, had been abandoned by them to despair, when circumstances had prevented them from carrying on the cruel game.

Her natural good sense and strength of mind came to her aid, enabling her to bear the disappointment with becoming firmness; and she was sufficiently recovered in a short

time to seek her friends, who had by this time returned to the house. Charles heard with satisfaction of young Sinclair's abrupt departure, as it left the field open for him ; and his behaviour towards Maria now left no doubt of the sincerity of his intentions. His father, delighted with the apparent prosperity of his project, and solicitous for the ultimate success of the dearest wish of his heart, had written to his noble friend, Lord Fitz Eustace, expressive of his hopes that his son, the heir of Earl Glenartney, might be the successful suitor for the hand of Miss Delmar ; urging, at the same time, a desire for this wish being kept secret from the young people at present, as he had found that matches, from being too much pressed, were not unfrequently frustrated. To this he received in answer, a letter, in which the baron appeared charmed with the proposal, giving it his entire approbation, and testifying much pleasure at the projected union of the families. Thus far

then the scheme prospered, and Mr. Hamilton daily, nay hourly, expected to hear that Charles had complied with his injunctions, and had been accepted; when Mortimer Delmar arrived from the north for the purpose of conducting his sister to their father. Many were the entreaties with which he was assailed by all the family to give them the pleasure of his company for a few days only, but he was immovably fixed in his determination to proceed forthwith, as the season was already far advanced.

Maria also joined in his plan of locomotion; for, since the young officer's flight, she had no longer found the pleasure she had formerly done in the gaieties of the hall; and, though she sustained her cheerfulness in the presence of the family, in solitude her thoughts would invariably turn on Sinclair. His unaccountable behaviour threw a shade of melancholy over her feelings at times, which, however, she never

appeared to carry with her beyond the seclusion of her chamber.

Merton Hall was still full of company when her brother made his appearance, and Charles, taken by surprise, at last saw it was not the time to talk to her of love, even could he have found an opportunity; he, therefore, gave it up for the present, determining if his father still pressed the measure, to take a trip to Ireland.

As he handed her to the phaeton, he ventured to say how greatly he was disappointed at her being carried off so unexpectedly, since his family and himself in particular had calculated upon the pleasure of a more extended visit. "Your departure will leave a vacuity, my dear Miss Delmar, in all around me, which I have no hope of removing, until I am able to have the pleasure of meeting you in London, which I shall hope to do as soon as you revisit this country."

She smiled, and coloured slightly, but

had no time for reply, as Mortimer hurried her into the carriage, and, amidst a renewal of kind wishes for their journey from the Hamilton's, they drove off.

"Bless me! Maria, how those girls talk; they would drive me distracted in a week. How could you stay there so long?"

"You should inquire, Mortimer, how I could leave them, when you had promised to fetch me, and delayed your arrival so long. You would have found me ready and willing before this, had you found the north less seductive, and me more important."

"Your reproach is just, Maria; I have been induced by Heron's solicitations to prolong my stay to a great length, and you will be surprised to hear that our friendship would not admit of a separation, since Sir George has agreed to accompany us to Ireland, whence, if my father consent, we intend to run over to France."

"What! turn truant again?" rejoined his

sister : "I hoped to keep you all the winter quite to myself, but I suppose the London season will alone attract you home, and I must now make the most of you."

"At present I have no intention of seeing England again for some time, but the term of my absence is undecided."

Their progress was thus beguiled by affectionate conversation, until the capital rose before them ; where they were joined by the baronet ; and, before leaving which, Mortimer wrote and despatched the following letter to Mr. Vernon :

London, October.

DEAR SIR,

The sudden and startling disclosure I learnt at your dwelling must prevent, at least for the present, my return to the scene of my unfortunate affection.

Alarmed and shocked by your disclosure, I have resolved upon quitting this country, and I trust time and reflection will restore my peace ; but at present my breast is in a tumult of contending emotions. Yet I do not say I will not return to Claybrook ; on the contrary, I hope the time may come when I shall be able to meet Ellen as the brother and friend I wish to prove myself. Accept

my gratitude for your kindness and cordiality, and believe me, when I assure you that I shall be ready at all times to act for Ellen any where, and in any thing in which you may deem my services useful to her. Tell her from me how much I have struggled to repress my unholy passion, and I believe the love I would convey in this letter is strictly fraternal.

Believe me, with every sentiment of respect,

Yours, &c.

MORTIMER DELMAR.

The party then embarked at the Tower stairs for Dublin, and, after a rough, though safe passage, of three days, arrived at the sister Island; whence, after a few weeks' sojourn, Sir George accompanied his dispirited friend to the Continent.

Lord Fitz Eustace took an opportunity, before Mortimer's departure, of informing his son and daughter of the contemplated alliance, but resolved not to torment her on the subject at present, she being far from well. Her indisposition was attributed to the separation from her brother and her friends at Merton Hall, and her father was constantly flattering himself that by an

early return to London he should restore her spirits. But he knew not that disappointment was the main cause of her gloom. Maria was perfectly silent on the subject of Sinclair, though, in the retirement of the ancient baronial mansion, she had leisure to indulge the painful recollections. She neither felt nor expressed any surprise at her father's announcement of Charles's attachment, since his conduct had plainly testified it; and, as Lord Fitz Eustace did not ask for her compliance, she heard the proposal in silence. During the time that intervened before they arrived in London for the season, her hopes of Sinclair's return had faded from her mind, and, though the germ of her love for him still lay dormant in her heart, the young and vigorous plant which had sprung from it had withered away; and she contemplated a union with Charles without dislike, though certainly not with any great degree of enthusiasm.

The second week in April brought the

baron and his daughter to London, and Maria commenced her third campaign to all appearance under equally favourable auspices with the two preceding. She had just attained her twenty-first year, that period at which the beauty and freshness of youth is still heightened by the full development of female charms. Every thing that could dazzle and delight was placed at her command by her father, yet Maria contemplated with diminished pleasure her return to the gaieties of the spring. Her brother, whom she tenderly loved, and whose society had communicated so much pleasure to her in every party, still remained abroad; and his return could not be anticipated, since he proposed visiting Greece, after having finished his projected tour in Italy. She also felt that she was going to meet the man to whom her hand was to be given, probably within a few months; and, though she had endeavoured to smother every recollection of Sinclair

she was aware she did not feel that affection for Charles which matrimony required.

Mr. Hamilton, for his son's sake, resolved to visit the metropolis, and therefore took a furnished house in Berkeley Square. Thus situated, he was enabled to watch the game he was so anxious to expedite, and he failed not to take every opportunity of seeing Lord Fitz Eustace and his daughter at his house. He urged his son by every means to settle the affair, by reminding him of his own impotence to provide him with suitable means to support the expected title; and represented the chance of his again meeting with such a brilliant alliance. Partly influenced by these arguments, and conscious of having by former conduct in a degree compromised his honour, Charles renewed his attentions to Maria on their reunion in the fashionable world; and in the course of a few weeks was involved in the gulf from which he had feebly endeavoured to escape. His

mornings were now devoted to walks and rides with Maria and his sisters, and in the evenings he met her in the crowded ball-room, the concert, or the opera. He found her ever urbane, ever elegant and pleasing, and her father eager to encourage him; it is, therefore, not surprising he was soon fairly caught in the golden snare into which his father had hurried him. In short he proposed, and was accepted. Yet no marked affection was displayed on either side, Maria received him as her future husband with courtesy, but it was visible at that time her love was not his. It is not female affection which is of the primary consequence before marriage; such is woman, and such her character, that her tenderness increases by time; and even should she evince no particular attachment before her union, she most likely becomes a good and devoted wife, should she experience even a less degree of affection than might be expected. Man, on the contrary, with so many other

opportunities of amusement, so many attractions besides those afforded by his home, should love truly and exclusively, ere he receives the hand for which he sues, since his affection rarely augments after the attainment of his object.

Charles Hamilton did not entertain any very strong attachment for Maria, although by constant attention to her, sentiments, which might be denominated esteem, had arisen in his mind. His vanity also was gratified by the congratulations of his friends, which, immediately on the announcement of the match, were showered on him. He was hailed by his young companions as a lucky dog, in winning the prize so many had longed to possess, while his other friends regarded it favourably, from that, as well as various other causes; and he deceived himself into the belief that he loved. The end of June was at length fixed upon for the ceremony to take place, and Maria, anxious for Mortimer's

presence, wrote to him, urging his return. There was but little time to spare on his journey, if he obeyed the summons, being then at Milan, and she had no fear of his compliance, as he had ever made it a point to gratify her. The interim therefore passed in a tranquil expectation of his arrival, and in the ordinary preparations for her great change. Every thing progressed smoothly, the important day approached, but no Mortimer had arrived; sometimes Maria thought of asking for delay, but she knew that it would be sacrificing the wishes of all her friends to her fancy; she therefore remained silent, and a circumstance, which happened about this time, induced her to hasten, rather than retard her marriage. She was at a ball where she again met—Frederic Sinclair! He whom she had endeavoured to banish from her mind. Both started, perhaps both were embarrassed; certainly, Maria felt a strange trepidation, which, however, she

mastered, when she observed the distance with which the captain returned her bow, and then advanced with a stiff air to speak. For a few minutes they conversed, but with a reserve alike painful to each, when Charles, approaching, claimed her hand for the ensuing quadrille, and passed Sinclair with a slight and haughty salutation. One look Frederic gave her as she passed, which called the blood to her cheek, but she did not observe the bitter smile which flitted over his features as he turned to another part of the room.

When she went down into the refreshment room with her partner, who was quite a stranger to her, she found Frederic close beside her. "Will Miss Delmar permit me to offer her anything," said he, "a wing of this chicken, perhaps?"

"Thank you, a glass of white wine is all I wish," replied she.

"There is not such a thing to be had, Maria," said Charles, who overheard her

request, "I have been trying to get one for my mother in vain. There is such a crowd."

"Nevertheless, if there be one in the room, Miss Delmar, you shall have it," said Sinclair, as he left her to seek it. In a few minutes he was seen returning, bearing, with some difficulty, the desired beverage, which, although reduced to half a glass, by the frequent concussions to which it had been subjected, he succeeded in placing in her hand. His smile of satisfaction, at her kind acknowledgment of his politeness, was returned by Hamilton with a frown; Maria was not blind to this conduct, she saw that Charles disliked the young officer, for which aversion her heart told her there might be a cause; therefore she avoided farther collision with her former admirer, and sought to efface the little impression this rencontre had made upon her. She felt angry with herself for the feeling which had arisen in her mind on

the meeting, and turned, with virtuous resolution, to the contemplation of her immediate wedding. The momentous day at length arrived, but with it no brother. She watched for him anxiously until the last moment, but in vain !

It is unnecessary to accompany the party to St. George's, Hanover Square, where, of course, as usual, there was *quantum sufficit* of blonde, orange flowers, and tears, without which many, we fancy, deem the ceremony but half complete. Though Maria was agitated, there was no scene, for she retained sufficient command over herself to act her part ; and, setting off for Paris from the church, she was spared the additional pang of subsequent leave-taking.

Some months rolled on, and the newly married pair, after having remained abroad six weeks, had repaired to Lord Fitz Eustace, with whom the winter was consumed.

CHAPTER IX.

Let reason teach what passion fain would hide,
That Hymen's bands by prudence should be tied.
Venus in vain the wedded pair would crown,
If angry fortune on their union frown.

LORD LITTLETON.

MEANWHILE, Mortimer and Sir George still continued in the South of Europe. At the time of leaving their native country, such had been the distress and excitement of the former, that nothing but constant bodily activity could, in any way, calm his mind ; he would climb the steepest mountains, or walk immense distances, to produce forgetfulness of the varied, painful events of the autumn ; he was silent and dejected,

until roused by company or wine, when his usual amiable temper was not unfrequently marked by a bitter irony, totally unlike himself. On account of this unsettled disposition, the two young men did not remain stationary in the south of France, as they had at first intended, but proceeded from Marseilles by sea, to Leghorn, whence they arrived, after some time, at Milan. The news of Maria's marriage did not reach Mortimer until after he had left that city, consequently, he found he had not sufficient time to comply with her request; he had written to her in reply, and, feeling much repugnance to retrace his steps at present, he continued his route to Naples. During his stay there, the Baronet saw, with much pleasure, that his friend's melancholy greatly abated, though he knew not the cause, since Delmar rarely referred to himself. The truth was, that time, that great ameliorator, assisted by variety, had tended to remove the acute remembrance

of all that had taken place at Heron Castle. Of his acquaintance with Ellen he thought, as we recal a painful dream, the principal features of which indeed are ineffaceable, but which loses all the horror of its reality as soon as we are completely aroused from our slumbers. He thought of her with interest, or pity, for he knew how deeply she had been injured, and he resolved, on his return, to repay, by his kindness and affection, the wrongs she had received. With regard to his partiality for Beatrice Heron, he still entertained the soothing recollection that her farewell had impressed him with, and a hope yet lingered, however faint, of having an opportunity of renewing attentions, which various little circumstances now told him he had erred in thinking displeasing. Through George he sometimes heard of her, and the secret pleasure any account of her gave him acted as balm to his wounded spirit, and if in any letter she mentioned his name, he

experienced a satisfaction, which was a convincing proof of the power she yet exercised over his mind. He subsequently accompanied George in his tour through the Greek islands, in a state more fit for real enjoyment.

The latter behaved with his usual gaiety, he never appeared to remember his attachment in England, but really to have freed his heart at the moment he bade his cousin think of him no more; yet, could his real feelings have been decyphered, it would have been discovered that he had frequently repented his precipitatiou, though his natural aversion to own himself in fault prevented his return home until it was too late. After an absence of eighteen months, he had almost determined to leave Mortimer alone, and repair to England, when he received information of an affair which dashed all his resolutions, all his hopes aside, and induced him to change his intentions and still to continue a wanderer.

The course of our story now leads us back to England, and to our fair friends Beatrice and Mary. Lady Heron did not remain many weeks at the Castle after her son's abrupt departure; for, being such a distance from the Metropolis, she had no intercourse with her friends, and she felt anxious to return to the Hall, where she had passed so many years. Behold her, then, resettled in her favourite abode with her two companions; each had felt keenly the absence of the travellers; the former knew her son too well to expect him to relent, and his departure for a probably long period, at a time when she had scarcely recovered the first shock of her husband's death; and, consequently, when George's society was, if possible, more dear to her than ever—his departure at such a season was doubly painful. The gentle Beatrice struggled with the gloom that oppressed her for some time, for she had felt equally with Delmar their last parting; and though her opinion of his love

for Ellen Vernon was partially removed by his inexplicable conduct, yet she could not comprehend that his behaviour, when they parted, was any evidence of affection for her. That Mortimer was fickle or inconstant she was unwilling to believe ; therefore she condemned herself, as we already have said, for precipitation : but, however anxious in her own mind to exculpate him, she suffered and sorrowed. Beatrice was not one of those to permit her own anxiety to supersede every other consideration ; she therefore devoted herself to her mother, and frequently strove, by a false hilarity, to animate her, and induce her to believe she had conquered her feelings.

Lady Heron was not deceived by this ; she saw how deeply her daughter was affected ; and, with a tender solicitude, she urged her, early in the winter, after their return to the Hall, to accept the invitation of an aunt residing in London, to spend some time with her. Beatrice assured her

parent such a visit could have no charms for her, but, on the contrary, she should feel so lonely, amongst thousands, that she was convinced she was much happier with a mother whose love was dearer to her than everything else. "Indeed," she added, "I should feel so persuaded you would want something I could do for you, that I should have no pleasure from my aunt's kindness in taking me out. No, my dear mother, permit me still to be your companion; and let Mary go to town, since both or either are invited."

After using various arguments, with a similar result, Lady Heron at length consented to Mary being her daughter's substitute, and Beatrice saw her cousin's embarkation for a gay world without a wish to accompany her. Mary, with characteristic heat, had felt indignant, rather than grieved, by George's resentment, and, after the first ebullition of sorrow for his treatment was past, her high spirit prompted

her to treat him with the coolness he himself had recommended. For this reason her correspondence with him was so languid that it was scarcely worth such a denomination, and the letters of each, like angels' visits, were few and far between. This angry feeling settled, after a time, into an indifference as unfortunate for herself as injurious to her former love for him. How little do the young and thoughtless consider, when they indulge or encourage their spleen, how inimical such feelings are to the growth of true affection! A lover's quarrel is frequently regarded by them as a cementer of firmer affection, or as a trivial circumstance, which a short period will remove. Love is truly a capricious power; but it is also a most delicate plant, which requires constant care in the first days of its infancy: storms may break or uproot it, and disputes tend to weaken, if not entirely destroy, that affection which might, under the influence of less

hasty and rude attacks, in time become firmly attached to its new tenement, when it will stand fearlessly before countless difficulties and dangers.

Mary had found her cousin determined, and she resolved to comfort herself with equal rigour. Thus her tenderness for him waned in the course of the following twelve-months ; and, when she quitted the Hall and repaired to London, she could scarcely be said to entertain any love for George beyond that natural to their near affinity.—Mrs. Freeman, the aunt she now for the first time in her life visited permanently, had been for several years a widow, and had constantly moved in the best society, before, as well as since the decease, of her husband, therefore with her Mary found no want of amusement.

Accustomed to a life of tranquillity, and suddenly placed in a situation where every thing was new and every thing charming in her eyes, it is not surprising that, with her

disposition, she should have seized with avidity the dazzling bauble held out to her. It was soon known she was a girl of good fortune, and she was courted and flattered by a bevy of young men, who amused themselves with her lively conversation, at the same time that they looked to the sterling qualities of her purse.

It was now that she had full scope for her coquetry; she was delighted to have it in her power to confer her favours on all, or either, of the gay troop which surrounded her; or to see them piqued by her attention to a new favourite. Few were those, however, whom her smile or frown could affect; since they were mostly, like herself, totally insincere. They were of that class who are ever ready to be seen parading the Park, riding with their hands cased in pale primrose-coloured gloves, leaning on the carriage door of a beautiful, a rich, or a fashionable woman; of that class who are ever ready to play the butterfly on every

occasion, but who at the same time are as fickle as the beautiful insect they resemble? Among those whom she had distinguished more particularly was the young Sir Harry Dinely, a man of good family, of prepossessing appearance, but of irregular, dissipated habits. A great part of his property had already been squandered on the turf, and he wisely thought a wife with twenty thousand pounds would be no bad prop to a half-ruined man. Mary took his fancy; and, in a moment of excitation, he resolved to make her his own. Her coquetry alone displeased him; but he consoled himself with the idea that he should be able to overcome, or at least to curb, that propensity, when once master of her affections; and he was not deterred from his intentions.

It does not lie within our province, neither is it our desire, to detain our readers so much from the more important parts of our history, as to enter into the details of

the means the fortune-hunter employed to gain the love of this giddy girl; suffice it to say, his wiles succeeded, and, a few days before she quitted Mrs. Freeman, he heard from her own lips the avowal of her corresponding attachment. He was not long in following her to the Hall, where his proposals, on being made known to Miss Beaumont's guardians, were politely, but positively, declined.

But it was in vain to argue with or persuade Mary; she openly declared to her aunt that she was determined nothing should induce her ever to think for an instant of being united to her cousin; and that, though her friends now thought proper to forbid her to marry Sir Harry, one twelve-month would place every thing at her own disposal, and then——This threat, so implied, grieved and displeased Lady Heron, who immediately wrote upon the subject to her son, entreating his return: but George replied by assuring her that, under the ex-

isting circumstances, that was impossible. After his cousin's undisguised declarations, he should only be rendering her and himself uncomfortable ; and, though he might regret the course he had pursued, not being able to avert its consequences, he begged his mother not to think about him, but to make Mary happy, if possible.

Lady Heron perceived with pain the whole tenor of this letter was expressive of disappointment ; but, as she easily comprehended her son's feelings, she resolved not to renew the subject, particularly as her niece continued perfectly resolute. With his recommendation to favour Sir Harry's suit, she dared not comply, since Mary's happiness would probably be sacrificed ; and she loved the mistaken girl, with all her faults, as a daughter. As soon as she was aware of the ill-fated attachment of Sir Harry Dinely, Mary was made a ward in Chancery, by which means her fortune was placed in

safety, and her lover effectually deterred, for the present, from urging his suit.

These measures only made Mary more obstinate, and, fixing her mind upon her majority, as the term of her thraldom, she contrived to correspond with, and even at times to see, Sir Harry, until that event made her capable of disposing of herself. For some weeks anterior to the twenty-first of July, the day on which she was of age, every thought was turned to her marriage, every order was issued—for Lady Heron, seeing her opposition was useless, finding her arguments and advice totally disregarded, and that she could not deter Mary from this ill-advised and perilous step, yielded a tacit consent to her union: thus she again constantly saw Sir Harry, and every thing was prepared that could be effected previous to that day. It came and it sped——then all was excitement, all bustle—the papers that required her signa-

ture, and business that awaited her decision, were disposed of ; and, on the thirtieth of that same month, the Morning Post announced that "on the previous day were married, at the parish church of Benner's Ford, in Hertfordshire, by the Rev. T. Goodman, Sir Harry Dinely, of Spring Hill, in the county of Staffordshire, to Mary, only child of the late Colonel Beaumont, of the H. E. I. C. S. ! ! "

The happy couple immediately set off for the Baronet's estate, to spend the honey moon.

CHAPTER X.

Oh woman ! in our hours of ease,
Uncertain, coy, and hard to please ;
And variable as the shade
By the light quivering aspen made,
When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou !

SCOTT.

WE must now give an eye to the affairs of another of our fair friends, and seek the retirement of Ellen Vernon.

The scenes of a tale, like the glasses of a magic lantern, must constantly change, to be amusing ; and, consequently, we must trouble our friends to put themselves in the first conveyance which offers, and accompany us to Claybrook.

The grief produced by a knowledge of the

circumstances of her early life, and the temporary acquaintance of a person so nearly related, and so dear to her, as young Delmar, threw a gloom over her spirits for some time, though the affection she had entertained speedily subsided into tender regard, when she knew that, as a brother only—and one also who would probably shun her through life, she must ever consider him. Mr. Vernon's kindness was so unbounded, and his affection so extreme, that the loss of one parent, and the errors of the other, whom she had never known, did not affect her so much, or make such a lasting impression, as those circumstances might, had she been less innocent, or less fortunately placed.

Until Mortimer's introduction, her hopes and fears, her pleasures and pains, had been bounded by her home. She was acquainted with few beyond the narrow sphere of the hamlet in which she dwelt, where her employment and delight had been, from childhood, to follow the steps of her guardian, and assist

in dispensing his bounty. Mr. Vernon had studiously avoided encouraging the least precosity in her, preferring to make her rather a plaything than a companion; consequently her mind was as pure and uncontaminated as it was possible for that of a mortal to be, and she was idolized by all around her. But while she had thus lived, loving and beloved, the rector had not observed that this beautiful and innocent girl at eighteen, possessed a character as unformed as that of a child. He was blind to any of her faults, which, in truth, were few; and, while he enjoyed the solace of her society, he entirely overlooked the instability of her character. Carried away by every impulse, she was powerfully affected, at first, by joy or sorrow, but was not long subject to its influence; and for that reason she recovered her spirits in the course of a few weeks after the painful disclosure, and the rectory was shortly restored to its wonted happiness and quietude.

Mr. Vernon casually heard of the removal of Mortimer and the Baronet, and, soon after, of the rest of the family from the castle ; but he did not mention it to Ellen, knowing a recurrence to the past could only distress her, and it was clear to him, especially after receiving the letter, that Delmar neither could, nor would, return ; therefore it was useless to recal him to her mind, since it would only cause her unavailing regret, and hitherto she had experienced a state of felicity unknown in the more exalted stations of life, unconscious, happily, of the ills which awaited her remaining days.

More than eighteen months had now elapsed since the period which had cast such a cloud over the previously smiling prospects of the youthful Ellen, when a circumstance occurred which, in that quiet situation, created much interest. It was a beautiful autumnal day, and the good old gentleman, accompanied by his constant companion, sallied forth to pay a round of

visits among the sick and aged cottagers.

The gentle Ellen had already dispensed part of her little store of comforts to a bed-rid-den female, while Mr. Vernon administered to the spiritual wants of the invalid, by reading a portion from the Holy Scriptures, when their attention was drawn from their pious occupation by an unusual noise proceeding from the more central part of the village; and in the next moment several peasants were seen running from various directions towards one point. Ellen hastened to the door, and turned her eyes anxiously in the direction of the sound, when she perceived, at a short distance up the road, a group of people collected round a carriage, which had apparently been over-turned. Without a moment's hesitation, or even saying a word to Mr. Vernon, she ran rather than walked to the spot, and eagerly demanded "What was the matter?" Being informed that a gentleman was hurt by the overturn of the chaise, caused by the wheel

having come off, she continued to push her way through the crowd, until she obtained a view of the stranger, who was now being raised from the ground. His countenance was deadly pale, while his closed eyes and powerless limbs, which hung uselessly by his side as the compassionate peasants removed the body, impressed her with the fatal consequences of the accident. Slightly shuddering, she caught hold of Mr. Vernon's arm, as he also reached the spot, exclaiming, "Oh! Sir, is he not dead?"

"I trust not, my love, at all events, every thing must be done to restore him."

"Where shall we take the poor gentleman to, your honour?" said one of the men to Mr. Vernon, who was now interrogating the driver as to who the stranger was. The man, however, could not give any information on that head, since he had only driven him a few miles from the last stage, and the rector, turning to his inter-

terrogator, replied, "To the rectory, my friends—there being no inn for some miles, I must afford him shelter, at least until we discover who he is. Rogers, take one of the post horses, and go over to Doctor Brownlow, requesting him to come to my house as soon as may be."

The man instantly obeyed, and, after having given some directions to the driver of the post chaise, Mr. Vernon followed the party, with their burden, and on the way enquired into the particulars of the accident.

As Ellen walked by the side of her best friend, listening to the peasants' recital, she frequently turned her eyes on the pallid features of the still insensible man; an involuntary chill ran through her frame, as she contemplated his death-like countenance, and she turned, with a half terrified look, to Mr. Vernon, who, on observing her alarmed appearance, said, "You are pale, my child, and I fear this accident has

frightened you; therefore you had better precede us, and order Margaret to prepare a room for the reception of our patient, who, I flatter myself, is already reviving a little." This, he said, more with the view of raising her spirits than from any change in the appearance of the stranger, who continued to be borne along, as at first, utterly unconscious of his situation. It however had the desired effect, for Ellen, delighted to be able to assist in any way, ran quickly towards home, where, having hastily informed the old servant what had happened, and given her Mr. Vernon's directions, she waited impatiently at the door for the arrival of the group, which was now seen advancing slowly up the narrow village road. A few minutes brought it to the humble dwelling, whence, having extended the apparently inanimate body on a sofa, the sympathising cottagers retired; but for some time they lingered about the door, anxious to learn if the worthy rector's

exertions to restore the young man to life, should prove successful.

Meantime, within the cottage all was activity, its inmates tried various restoratives, usual in such cases, at first without effect, but at length a slight movement in the pulse was discernible; and, animated by hope, to increased endeavours, they had soon the satisfaction of seeing the bloodless lips begin to quiver, and then a deep sigh broke from the oppressed chest of the sufferer. "See, he revives, grand-father!" said Ellen, in a low tone, as she continued to bathe his temples. Mr. Vernon silently acquiesced, and continued his efforts. The voice of Ellen, gentle as it was, roused the dormant faculties of the invalid, and in a few moments he unclosed his eyes, casting a languid look upon the anxious countenance of the beautiful girl who bent over him. But his ideas were too confused to bear the light, the strange scenes, united to the violent pain under which he was suffering,

were too much for his newly awakened senses, and he immediately relapsed into a state of insensibility. Equally alarmed, and distressed, Mr. Vernon now expected his medical friend with anxiety, without, however, relaxing his attentions to his guest, who continued to baffle all their village Esculapian skill, until Doctor Brownlow's arrival.

By his applications the stranger was soon restored to his senses, but such was his state that, although no bones were fractured by the fall, Doctor Brownlow advised him to keep very quiet, and certainly to remain where he was for a few days ; promising to see him again on the following morning. In compliance with this advice, Mr. Hargrave (for such was the name on a card found in the gentleman's pocket, during his insensibility) Mr. Hargrave agreed to have the chaise sent away, ordered his portmanteau to be brought to the cottage, and, as he felt considerably

indisposed, retired to the room prepared for him. The evening was one of anxiety to Mr. Vernon and Ellen, unaccustomed as they were to anything so alarming as the accident which had happened. Mr. Hargrave appeared to the former, who attended him with much solicitude, to be very unwell, and the latter failed not to participate in his anxiety. So much indeed was she excited by the events of the day that it was late before she could resign herself to sleep, and it was still early when she entered the parlour, impatient to learn from Mr. Vernon the state of their guest.

"Well, dear sir," said she as soon as they met, "is Mr. Hargrave better? I have been expecting to see you with your report the last half hour."

"I am happy to say, my dear, that his health appears so much improved that he declared his intention of rising, but I have persuaded him to remain quiet until after Brownlow's visit, which will be early."

"That is indeed much better news than I anticipated," returned Ellen, smiling; "you seemed so alarmed last evening, for the consequences of the fall, that you made me quite uneasy, and I have dreamed all night long of people being killed, and others going mad, until I fancied the gentleman must be worse."

"Silly child," said the old man, fondly stroking her cheek as he took his seat at the breakfast table, "I did not think you were such a coward. But, come, we must send Mr. Hargrave some breakfast."

On the doctor's arrival, he pronounced favourably on the stranger's state, declaring that there did not exist any occasion for his confining himself to his room; expressing his hope of seeing him completely restored to health in a week, at the same time reiterating his injunctions to remain quiet during that time, before resuming his journey. How far Mr. Hargrave might have been induced to comply with this

advice, under other circumstances, must now remain a mystery; but having viewed Ellen's exquisite beauty on the preceding day, and being one of those who regard female loveliness with more than common pleasure, it required very little persuasion to engage him to prolong his stay. With Mr. Vernon he was much pleased; his urbanity and kindness were so entirely the offspring of his nature that he could not feel himself an intruder, while Ellen insensibly won her way in his favour. With a frank simplicity, unknown to the great world, she delighted in affording him the amusement which, for several days, his state demanded, for, having received some severe bruises, the stiffness consequent upon them confined him the first day or two to a couch. She sought every thing which she thought would add to his pleasure or comfort; produced every scrap of literature which the cottage could boast, and let no opportunity escape of waiting upon him. What man does not

feel, though he may not be ingenuous enough to own, the incense offered to his natural individuality by his finding himself the object of a lovely girl's solicitude ! Does he not revel in the delight of her winning attention, and experience a species of luxury which, like the voice of the Syren, leads him farther and farther into an enervating inactivity, while he is swiftly carried imperceptibly towards a dangerous Charybdis !

Under the influence of these feelings, Mr. Hargrave was unwilling to own himself restored to his wonted health, since such a declaration must unavoidably compel him to take leave of friends for whom he had already conceived a strong partiality. Thus he permitted himself to be considered an invalid some days beyond the time he had any claim to the appellation. He had insinuated himself into the good will of all around him ; he accompanied Ellen to her little school, or attended

her in her progress through the village on her charitable expeditions, where his munificence was rewarded by the blessings of the poor, and, what was far more valuable and gratifying to him, a sunny smile of grateful acknowledgment from Ellen. When in the cottage he would read any, or every thing, to her and Mr. Vernon, conveying additional attraction to the volume, whether light or serious, by his full and richly toned voice. He also gratified the former by a great attention to her favourite dumb companions, and, in short, took every means of gaining the affection of one who, it will readily be believed, was already mistress of his heart.

A fortnight had insensibly rolled away, for many days Hargrave had not been able to play his part of invalid, *faute de moyens*, and he felt he had no longer any right or reason to impose on Mr. Vernon's hospitality. He, therefore, reluctantly ordered a postchaise on the following morning to proceed, and

informed the rector of his intention; at the same time letting fall such hints of his admiration for the fair girl, who had been his constant companion for some time, that left little room for doubt of his having conceived a passion for her. Mr. Vernon, however, did not take alarm at this circumstance, since he saw nothing more natural than for his visiter to be charmed with his favourite; he had been pleased with the society of one whose elegant manners and lively wit amused his solitude, and he, like most men, was tardy in observing the growing interest on the part of Hargrave for Ellen. Besides, his duties leading him frequently among his flock, the young people had been left more together than might, perhaps, be considered prudent or even just for their repose; but Mr. Vernon, simple-minded and unsuspicuous, never for an instant supposed that, by his want of surveillance, he was furnishing every facility for the production

of feelings equally' powerful and hazardous.

Ellen's *naiveté* was so great that his suspicions were not roused ; when, therefore, on the eve of departure, their guest signified how much his interest was excited for Mr. Vernon's supposed grandchild, and his intention of stopping at Claybrook again for a few days, on his passage from the north, the good clergyman began to fear for the happiness of his protégée, which was not decreased during the month of Mr. Hargrave's absence. He saw her unusually pensive, and, unlike her ordinary habits, listless and uneasy, while her spirits at times flagged more than they had ever done before ; and the reception she gave Hargrave, on his return, completely removed every doubt which could remain of her attachment. The sparkling eye, the flushed cheek, and tremulous, yet fervent, pressure of the hand, proved to Mr. Vernon that she returned Hargrave's equally decided joy

at their reunion ; and he therefore resolved immediately to discover more about him than he had thought necessary to do, while he was only a temporary inmate of his house. Mr. Vernon anxiously waited the moment that Hargrave's avowal should enable him to demand such explanations as he had both a right and desire to receive. He was not long left ungratified, for, on the third morning, Hargrave, having taken a walk with his friends, followed Ellen into the green-house, where she was busily tending some favourite plants. For a few minutes he assisted her in divesting them of their withered leaves, then drawing her arm gently within his, he led her down the shrubbery.

It is unnecessary to relate their conversation ; suffice it to say that, ere many minutes had elapsed, he had offered his hand and heart upon the altar of love ; and had received Ellen's permission to speak to Mr. Vernon. Scarcely, however had

she yielded so far, than she shot like an arrow from a bow through a side gate, and quickly regained the house, leaving the exhilarated Hargrave to pursue his own course. Ellen's countenance, as she entered the parlour, betrayed to Mr. Vernon that something had occurred to agitate her; but, rightly judging the cause, he forbore to notice her tearful eye; and, on leaving the room shortly after, he encountered his guest, who was not long in making him acquainted with his demand. Having listened to this, the rector took the young lover's hand, and, with tears in his eyes, replied, "As far as I know of you at present, my young friend, I am safe in saying that I see no objection to your union with my little Ellen, whose happiness you may already have discovered is one of the dearest wishes of my heart; yet there is still something I would inquire concerning your family, your connections, sir, which must satisfy my expectations and wishes before I can

give you an unqualified consent to your considering Ellen your own."

" That is only just, sir," returned Hargrave; " I flatter myself you will not find anything to disapprove of in your inquiry. My family is ancient, and has the honour to claim a descent from the Scottish kings. For myself, sir, I am independent, and expect on the demise of a distant relation, who has adopted me, to come into possession of a good property. Your doubts, if you still have any, may all be satisfied by application to a friend of mine, who is tutor to the son of Lord C——, who, I believe, resides somewhere in this neighbourhood. He, I am sure, will testify to the uprightness of my character, and —"

" I would not have you suppose I have any fear of your character, Mr. Hargrave," interrupted Mr. Vernon, fearful he should offend by his hesitation, " only you know our acquaintance has been short."

" Oh, certainly, sir; I am perfectly will-

ing, nay, solicitous you should ascertain the truth of all I have told you; and, if you please, will go over to my friend and request him to call upon you, since you are not in the habit of going so far from home."

To this Mr. Vernon, who was anxious not to let his young friend think he doubted his respectability, would scarcely consent, though he at length acquiesced, in consequence of Hargrave's pressing him on the subject; and the plan was carried into execution that very afternoon, and he obtained the promise of his friend to call at the rectory the following morning.

Accordingly the unsuspecting clergyman was visited by a gentleman named Edmonds, who confirmed every thing which he had previously learnt from Mr. Hargrave; adding, also, that his character was unimpeachable.

Mr. Vernon's unworldly habits, however, prevented his making many inquiries of a person like Mr. Edmonds, whose easy

manners, or rather effrontery and polished impudence, the rector mistook for the open, candid sentiments of a generous breast. His information was conveyed with such an air of perfect assurance that Mr. Vernon could not hesitate, and seemed completely satisfied; indeed, how could he doubt the truth of circumstances which he was prone to hope were advantageous to his child? No sooner had he dismissed this gentleman, whose presence considerably oppressed him, though he knew not why, than he called Ellen into his study. Surely every one is aware of the awe ever felt by the young, particularly, by an introduction into that sanctum sanctorum of a friend possessing power over their destiny! How many hearts have palpitated with indefinable sensations of hope, fear, or anger, as their owners approached the redoubted door! and how many have returned from it with renewed smiles, or with their evil presentiments painfully confirmed! Ellen, however,

had no fears in entering the little apartment, since it had been her constant and favourite resort from infancy; there she had drawn new treasures each day from the cabinet of literature, there she had always found her kind friend ready to instruct, to cherish her; and now, although she guessed the reason of her being there, and involuntarily trembled with agitation, yet she could scarcely be said to fear, since she felt assured Mr. Vernon would not unnecessarily oppose her happiness. It was, therefore, without surprise that she listened, while he informed her of Hargrave's demand. "I have every reason to believe, my dear Ellen," he continued, "from what I have observed, that you love our young friend, and consequently my consent to your union is given with unfeigned satisfaction. May you, my love, be as happy as I wish you to be!"

He kissed her as he spoke, and she threw herself into the rector's willing arms, and sobbed out her love and gratitude.

"But, indeed, sir," she said, as soon as she could command her voice, "I cannot leave you. I should never be happy knowing you were all alone. Besides, Mr. Hargrave is used to live in a sphere so far above me, that I fear I should make him blush for my ignorance."

"Fear not, my dear, on that account; and as to your first objection, I foresee that is not insurmountable, and we will speak to Hargrave about it. Now let us join him, by this time he must have returned."

Hargrave had been out all the afternoon, determined to avoid all collision with his friend; but when the evening drew on, and he concluded Mr. Edmonds must long since have departed, he returned to the cottage; and, on entering the parlour, where lights, with

The bubbling and loud hissing urn,
already waited for Ellen and Mr. Vernon,
he impatiently paced the floor. A very few
minutes elapsed ere they joined him, when

when Mr. Vernon, leading the timid, shrinking Ellen forward, placed her hand in that of her lover, who started forward to receive the boon : he said, " I delegate the happiness of this dear child to you, Hargrave, in the hope that you will be her protector and support, when I am rendered incapable, by death, of affording her the care she will ever require. Remember, if you do not do your duty by her, the punishment of the orphan's Omnipotent Father will surely fall upon you ! "

As Hargrave bent over, and, with fervour, pressed his lips on the snowy forehead of his prize, and murmured something about gratitude and eternal fidelity, his cheek flushed, it might be with pleasure or surprise ; but, from whatever cause his confusion arose, it mattered not, since it was probably unmarked, or, if perceived, attributed by Mr. Vernon to the former.

Happiness seemed to reign in the little dwelling, for Hargrave was intoxicated

with delight; his wit sparkled, his love shone forth in all its unrestrained warmth, and every other thought but the present was banished. Ellen, the beautiful Ellen, was his, and he thought himself the most envied of mortals! Ellen received and returned his tenderness with a confidence emanating from her love, her gentleness, and her purity of mind; while Mr. Vernon witnessed with infinite satisfaction their mutual happiness.

A long esteemed female friend of the rector's was prevailed upon to leave her strict retirement in a neighbouring hamlet, where she had been stationary for years, to watch over and guide her young favourite until the moment should arrive for her to give her hand and faith to the impassioned Hargrave.

Mrs. Greville was a maiden lady, who, having been deprived by sudden death of the object of her affections on the eve of their union in early life, had determined

never again to submit her widowed and constant heart to the chance of similar trials. Thus, although solicitations had not been wanting, since at that time she was young, rich, and pretty, she had refused them all; and when, in after years, unforeseen misfortunes had deprived her of great part of her property, she had retired into the country, where she had passed her time in acts of charity, and was looked upon with love and veneration by her poorer neighbours, and with esteem by those few who called her friend. In this lady, Ellen found an inestimable companion during the short time that intervened before she changed her name, a time which was wasted away on the light downy pinions of the blind and treacherous God. Every day added pleasures to the sweet communion of the lovers: with his elegant companion leaning on his arm, Hargrave strolled for hours unconscious that aught breathed but himself and the fair being

whose sweet voice seemed, in his ear, the most delightful melody, and whose eyes, as they met his, beamed with happiness and love. Often as her light form bounded to his side after a temporary separation, and she lavished her soft endearments upon him, he half doubted if his exquisite sensations were not too intoxicating to warrant reality; whether he were, indeed, the betrothed husband of the creature of light before him. He would gaze upon her as upon an idol, until his name, coupled with an endearing epithet, and pronounced in a thrilling tone of affection, would recal him from his glowing imaginings, and he would load her with caresses. He had no sooner been made acquainted with Ellen's desire to remain at Claybrook, than he immediately acquiesced with the greatest solicitude for her comfort; but he took that opportunity of mentioning the obligation he was under of spending some part of every year with his old relation, from whom he ex-

pected his increase of fortune ; which, after his sacrifice, she could not object to.

These obstacles removed, everything looked bright, and they saw, or would only see, happiness, above, below and around them.

What a picture of bliss ! what ideal castles did not Hargrave's heated fancy create ! while love ! love ! love ! filled up each hour ! He retired to rest to dream of his mistress, and again rose to repeat the pleasing game, which had made the previous day fly so quickly.

Thus passed a month—the probationary month which was necessary for the marriage preparations,—the arrangements are concluded ; the elegant, but neat, unostentatious *trousseau* completed ; the presents befitting one lover to offer, and the other to accept, are made, and the last evening is arrived, before the day which is to seal the lot of each youthful hand and heart, until the scythe of time shall sever the existence of one, or both. For some time they conversed

cheerfully, but by degrees, from various causes, all became grave; Mr. Vernon sat in his elbow chair with his hands clasped upon his breast, pondering on the relinquishment of his adopted child to the care of another; of his satisfaction in seeing her suitably provided for ere he was called to his great account, and he omitted not, during his meditations, to offer up many fervent prayers to Heaven for her welfare.

Mrs. Greville mused on by-gone days, when, like her young friends, fortunate love made everything put on a smiling appearance, so soon, alas! to be clouded by death! Ellen bent silently over her work-frame to conceal the tears of agitation, which now and then trickled down her cheek as she thought of the coming trial; and her lover, unlike his ordinary manner, looked gloomy, while a frown passed rapidly over his brow, and an occasional start, as of pain, was observable from time to time. From this reverie he was

roused by Ellen laying her hand lightly on his arm, and saying, in a low tone, "What is the matter, dear Hargrave? You are out of spirits to-night."

He started, and while he endeavoured to banish his dejection, he replied, "How can I be cheerful, my Ellen, when I see you sad? I see your tears flow, and I cannot but sympathise, and fear, however fond, I may still be unworthy your affection."

Ellen smiled reproachfully, "Did you not promise me, yesterday, you would not let me hear any more on that subject, or see those heavy frowns, which alike frighten and distress me?"

"True, dearest, and if I may venture again to tender my broken word, I will shew you I can keep it better."

"In that hope, I believe," replied she, "I must pardon you. Come, my grandfather wants you to read a little to him."

The thoughtful vein of the party being now broken, the evening was ended happily.



CHAPTER XI.

I gave away the bride—
Gave the dear youth what kings could not have given.
Then bless'd them both, and put my trust in heaven.

BLOOMFIELD.

THE momentous morning arrived, the wedding day dawned, and with it the renewed agitation of the bride. Her whole frame trembled so violently that she was obliged, more than once, during the operations of the toilet, to desist for a few minutes ; but, at length, just before nine o'clock, the hour appointed for the ceremony to take place, she was pronounced by her friend, Mrs. Grenville, to be completely ready ; and she fortunately had a short interval

to compose her spirits, before Mr. Vernon entered to conduct her to the church, which stood close to the cottage. The rose and the lily might have been proud to behold the beautiful girl assimilated with them, for she was habited in a dress of the purest white, simply, but beautifully, embroidered, a half-blown blush-rose graced a bosom scarcely less fair than itself, while a French lace veil, the gift of her betrothed, was thrown over her guileless head, and partially concealed behind its ample folds the anxiety, but not the beauty, of its mistress.

Her guardian now entered, and, after having tenderly embraced her, led her from the room, and conducted her through the little gate into the church-yard. As they entered the sacred edifice, where Mr. Vernon himself was to perform the ceremony, the portal was thronged by the villagers—by those who had known Ellen from childhood, those who had tasted her bounty, and felt her goodness; and many were the blessings

called down upon her as she passed. . . But she raised not her head in acknowledgment, and clung to the arm of the rector yet more closely.

But now she stands beside Hargrave at the altar, and the vows are pronounced by the former, in a firm, clear voice; and by the latter, in a scarcely audible one. When Hargrave, however, attempted to place the ring on the hand of the half-fainting girl, it was observed that his tremulous movement gave the lie to his voice, and the holy emblem of their faith dropped and rung shrilly on the pavement. All started, and Mrs. Greville stooped hastily, and returned it to the bridegroom, whose involuntary trepidation was now undisguised. Mr. Vernon, notwithstanding his efforts to be calm, could scarcely proceed, several times he cleared his voice, and once he raised his handkerchief to remove the moisture which dimmed his sight, before he reached the conclusion of the service. He then stepped forward to

embrace his adopted child, but, ere he could gain the spot where she stood, Ellen had fallen insensible into the arms of her husband. After a few minutes, spent in restoring her to consciousness, Hargrave carried, rather than led, her from the church; and they had hardly passed from under the roof of the sacred edifice, when one long loud cheer was raised. Flowers were showered from the hand of almost every parishioner, and if all the hopes and good wishes, which that day were formed, could have been realised, Mr. and Mrs. Hargrave would indeed have been favoured. A radiant smile beamed on Ellen's pale countenance, as she lifted her head, and for an instant looked upon the groups around her, where every face bespoke the interest they felt in their young benefactress. Their sight of her was transient, for the cottage was soon regained, and she sought in her own room the composure which she so much required.

Several days glided away in a species of

dreamy delight, resembling a glassy stream;

So calm the waters seem to stray,
And yet they glide like happiness away.

But those felicitous days, which in effect seemed too unmixed with alloy to endure long, these days having been extended to a month, Hargrave began to think of quitting the rural shade for a while. His departure was a trial to the young wife, who had not anticipated so early a separation, and who had also indulged the hope of accompanying him in his temporary excursions. That idea, however, was soon crushed, since, two evenings before the day on which he had announced he intended to leave her, as they were seated together with Mr. Vernon on a bench in the garden, he said, "My Ellen's eloquent eyes tell me how much she reproaches me for not taking her with me on this journey, but her wish will cease, I know, when I tell her it is for

"my advantage that I request her to stay behind."

"Can you mention any thing I would not resign for you, dear?" replied she, tenderly pressing his hand which she held in her's.

"Scarcely, I believe; and that conviction makes me, perhaps, more bold in preferring another petition, the greatest I have ever ventured upon, my own little wife, since I received the gift of yourself; yet, when I tell you that also will conduce to our future happiness, I feel confident of your acquiescence."

"You are right," returned his wife, "you know you can command anything in my power, and I am sure you would not ask what I should be unwilling or unable to accord; therefore, let me know how to gratify you; you can depend on my doing as you wish."

"You are ever kind, my Ellen," returned Hargrave, fondly; "and I will no longer

hesitate in making you aware that several circumstances exist, which conspire to make it necessary that our union should be kept secret a few months, and I hope you will consent to remain unknown, at present. I ——”

“What!” exclaimed Mr. Vernon, in a tone of surprise, not unmixed with displeasure. “What! not acknowledge your wife? Surely, Mr. Hargrave, such is not your intention?”

“My heart acknowledges her, Mr. Vernon,” replied the young man, “and it is solely for her sake, and that of her children, should we be blessed with any, that I require this concealment.”

“You must explain yourself, Mr. Hargrave, I must know the reasons for this.”

“You shall, sir; I do not wish to be disingenuous, and it is perfectly just you should expect an explanation. The relation, whose heir I have ever considered myself, is old and eccentric, and I fear,

were he to take it into his head to make a will before I have a son, he might change his mind, and bequeath his property to another more extensive branch of his family; therefore, until the birth of a son, I entreat you and Ellen to indulge me in this wish."

"Such a demand is unaccountable," said the rector, "and your friend must be strange indeed."

"True, dear sir, but such is the case. Were it not for Ellen's good, I would not name the circumstance, since I do not care for myself. I know what a material difference it will make to her, if things should happen as I mentioned; still, I will declare my marriage, and in so doing risk everything, if you desire it. Speak, dear Ellen, and say what you think of my request."

"I think," replied Ellen, mildly, "that it is my duty, as well as my wish, to do every thing for your comfort and benefit. I know nothing about the affairs of which

you speak ; but, as you say it will be of consequence to you to postpone my introduction to your relation, I should deem myself selfish to refuse, and therefore willingly agree to the proposition."

" You know not how much I am your debtor, dearest," answered Hargrave, affectionately caressing her. " I promise you, you shall not lose by your compliance. It now only remains for us to remove Mr. Vernon's objections, which I hope are already weakened." As he spoke, he turned to the rector, who, during Ellen's speech, had been plunged in a reverie.

Hargrave's wish had not only astonished, but alarmed, him : he scarcely knew why, an indefinable dread crept over him ; but he saw he had gone too far to recede, he knew no one in the great world to whom he could apply for information or advice, and, perhaps, from a natural timidity of character, he shrank from raising the veil of mystery which appeared to hang over

the young husband. He therefore replied, after a moment's hesitation, by expressing himself still unsatisfied with the proposition; yet, as Hargrave assured him that Ellen's happiness was at stake, and she had already promised compliance, appearing entirely satisfied, he would consent, on condition of the disclosure of the marriage being deferred only until they had a child. This stipulation was readily agreed to, and the subject was soon forgotten, amidst the superlative anxiety of Hargrave's absence, which, he assured Ellen, should be as short as possible, though he either could not, or would not, determine its duration.

She was thus left in her solitude, to ponder at leisure over the delightful, but surprising, nay, almost incomprehensible, events which had rapidly followed each other the last three months. During that time, every thing had seemed a whirl—a dream. It had been a season of such unexpected happiness that, when she looked

around and missed her fond husband, she was almost tempted to ask herself if she were really married,—whether she were indeed the adored wife of Mr. Hargrave, or only the victim of delusion! In a short time, however, this feeling wore off, she received the most tender letters from her husband, and she was thus enabled to support the tedium inflicted by his protracted return.

CHAPTER XII.

How many in the married state we find
Wedded in person, but divorced in mind.
Mezentius chained the living to the dead,
Unnatural union, which has horror bred
Though but one victim suffered by the chain,
While wedlock gives to two an equal pain.

MARRIAGE. OLD POEM.

AGAIN we shift the scene, and carry our kind readers to the busy city. It is into a small, elegantly furnished room, in a house in Grosvenor Place we would introduce them, and, casting around them the veil of invisibility, request them to observe
What passes in the chamber.

The open window admitted the balmy air of a May morning, circulating through the

apartment, loaded with the fragrance of various hot-house plants, which occupied several stands. Around were seen many little articles of taste, such as marquetry cabinets, inlaid tables, antique china, &c., while a piano and harp seemed to indicate that harmony was no slight favourite with the fair owner. She was seated close to the latter instrument, the strings of which she from time to time struck, but with a look of so much abstraction that it was apparent her thoughts did not accord with her employment; and in a few minutes she quitted her position, and, approaching a table, on which was scattered a profusion of billêts of divers colours, intermingled with invitation and visiting cards, while a silver ink-stand and writing implements claimed their place also, she indited a few lines with a listless air. But this effort failed to amuse; and, laying the pen aside, she sunk into a large chair, and began to pull a rose, which she gathered, to pieces.

While so engaged and deeply ruminating, a loud knock at the street door startled her; and a slight increase of colour was visible on her cheek, as she heard a well known foot on the stairs. The door opened, and the servant ushered Captain Sinclair into her presence. He entered with a sparkling eye, and, placing a bouquet of choice flowers on the table beside her, said, as he pressed the delicate hand held out to him, "I hope you are not ill, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, your absence last night, from my mother's, made us fear such was the case."

"Mrs. Sinclair is very kind," replied Mrs. Hamilton, "to think about me, but her fears were groundless, as I really am quite well. The truth is, I was not in spirits to go out last evening, and had I come to her party, I should only have been very stupid."

"Impossible, Maria, you are brilliant everywhere."

"I should have forfeited my character then, if such be your opinion," replied Mrs. Hamilton, with a smile. "I intend, however, to see your mother to-day, and hope to make my peace with her."

"I can promise that being soon effected, for where are you not omnipotent?"

Maria turned a deaf ear to this speech, as well as a wilful blindness to the look which accompanied it; saying, hastily, "Have you seen Lady Scarsdale, since she was at Almack's?"

"No, but I heard that she was going abroad directly."

"Indeed! from whom had you that news?"

"From Lady Cransted:—but, by the bye, shall I see you at the Opera, to-night?"

"I think not, Charles dines at home, and you know he hates music, and I will not leave him at home alone."

"You are too good to him, Mrs. Hamilton; he would not stay at home for you."

"That must not deter me from doing what I think right, Frederic," she replied, seriously, while a momentary gloom overspread her before smiling countenance: "besides, I dare say he would indulge me in the same way, were I to ask it."

"I am glad you think so," replied her visiter, with a pitying look. "Still I think you might get away by ten o'clock. Perhaps he may go out by that time."

"Well, I shall see, your mother has the promise of the box to-night, you know, and you go with her."

"Certainly, but I do not mean to stay unless you come."

"Nonsense: I do not think I shall indulge you, to punish your want of gallantry to your mother; you ought to remain for her sake."

"If you are really determined to be so cruel, I shall not conclude my visit until you satisfy my envie for melody. Pray let me hear a song,—the Opera will not furnish

any I like so well: come. I am sure your harp is conveniently placed for my request." As he spoke he rose and commenced turning over her music-book.

"It is quite out of tune," she replied; "besides, I have a cold."

"A sudden one, Maria; you said just now you were quite well. However, I am not one to require any thing which you dislike, so withdraw my suit."

She coloured deeply, as he turned with an air of pique to take up his hat, and to cover which she moved to the harp, saying, with a laugh, as she struck a prefatory chord, "Spoilt children must always be humoured, it seems, and I believe you soldiers are just like them."

"I will be like anything to please you, Maria," said the young officer, as he stood by her side, all attention.

The song was scarcely concluded, and he expressed his gratification, when another knock announced fresh visitors; and Sin-

clair hastily repeated his hopes of seeing her in the evening, adding, as he laid his hand on the lock of the door, "But at least, you go to the Fancy Fair, in the Regent's Park, to-morrow?"

"Perhaps—are you going?" He bowed acquiescence, and quitted the room, with an air of evident satisfaction, to give place to a host of acquaintance; during whose visit, it may not be amiss to explain the causes which had led to the foregoing scene.

Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton, as we previously intimated, made Ireland their residence during the winter which followed their alliance. Lord Fitz Eustace, happy in the achievement of his wishes, appeared the kindest of fathers-in-law; and it would indeed have been strange if the young people had not felt perfectly contented. All that they could demand, or that money could furnish, was theirs. Charles, at that time was, at least, an attentive, if not à

tender, husband, and the amiable Maria was happy. A mutual esteem existed between them, which supplied the want of other feelings, and Maria, both from duty and inclination, yielded, in many instances, to her more selfish partner, with that delightful grace which was natural to her; being a quality men so seldom know how to equal, much less to excel in the female character. The early spring found them in the metropolis, where they were at first deeply engaged in the mysteries and vexations of their new establishment. Grosvenor Place was selected as the spot for their residence; and, at the commencement of the season, they were installed in their new abode, which, for the taste and elegance of its decorations, was surpassed by few. Mrs. Hamilton's equipage was remarkable for its handsome, though unostentatious, appearance; while its fair owner was admired and courted by all, for her peculiar attractions.

At first, Charles, flattered and pleased by the novelty of his situation, was seen everywhere in his lady's presence, and the world asserted that Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton were a truly happy couple. The few weeks, however, before they departed for Merton Hall, where they passed the summer, he partly relapsed into his old habits of gratifying himself, without considering her so much as he had done. But this might arise from the length of the season, which had been unusually protracted, and from a satiety of pleasure. Each subsequent month unfortunately proved, more strongly, that his selfishness was again resuming its empire over him, and that the complaisance he had shown, immediately after his marriage, was on the wane. Still, no appearance of discomfort was visible, on the part of either; Maria conciliated him as usual, and frequently with the same success, though Charles's indifference gradually increased, and he followed his own

pursuits, in general, without consulting his wife; who, a high-spirited girl, never let it appear that she, in any degree, felt the neglect she frequently experienced the following year. No one was taken into her confidence—no one would have suspected, from her behaviour, that she was other than a happy wife.

It is but too often the custom for married people to appear separately in public, therefore Mrs. Hamilton's being frequently alone elicited no surprise, except what arose from the difference of the former season. This, however, was only remarked by a few, and was quickly forgotten in a gay world, where a circumstance must be of great importance to excite surprise a third day. Another thing, which tended to make him more careless, was the absence of any immediate prospect of family, which was an object of great solicitude to both families, from the expectation of the title which descended to the younger Hamilton. Maria

sorrowed in secret over this disappointment, which she felt was combining, with other causes, to rob her of the limited portion of affection she had commanded from her husband.

During this time, they kept a great deal of company, and their parties, ever brilliant and recherché, were eagerly sought by their numerous acquaintance, at which time Charles always appeared to advantage, since he then assumed the tone and manner befitting his matrimonial character. These temporary fits of attention made Maria more sensible of the coldness of his ordinary conduct ; but, while in the midst of a constant round of engagements, she was able to ward off her distress at his estrangement. It is true he seldom refused her any thing she desired, or treated her with harshness ; but it was the frigidity of manner, the want of interest, of kindness, which affected Mrs. Hamilton ; and which, notwithstanding her attempts to overcome, still existed. Her

part was a difficult one to sustain for a great length of time ; and, in spite of her endeavours to the contrary, her unrequited tenderness decreased, and with it the poignancy of her regret at the appearance of the fatal means of its destruction. She ceased to remark Mr. Hamilton's absence with her former uneasiness, though duty made her still attentive to him when able to be so, and sought—and, in seeking, found, amusement and solace in other objects.

The wheel of time revolves, bearing with it the destinies of this ill-fated pair ; and another year had flown—making but little alteration in their sentiments ; though, in Charles's behaviour, another change was wrought. He would sometimes forsake his home for weeks, to visit France or Scotland, where he would watch over the declining health of Lord Glenartney. These excursions, together with his shooting expeditions to the moors, employed him until his wife's return to London with her father, at whose

Irish domain she had been staying the whole summer; while Charles pursued his own amusement in England, only devoting a few weeks at a time to trips over to see Mrs. Hamilton, to whom an appearance of affection, at least, was due. While these visits lasted, Maria observed that an augmented gloom appeared to have fastened itself on her husband, which she deplored, but knew not how to remove, since to all her enquiries he gave her no satisfactory answer.

Again the spring commenced, and again they trod the path of pleasure, as before, sometimes together, but more frequently apart. Charles entered into every dissipation—was often absent when morning dawned—days would elapse without his meeting Maria for an hour, except in society; he seemed, indeed, to avoid being alone with her. And she, having her own employments, now little heeded his absence.

Lively, fascinating, and fashionable, Mrs. Hamilton was equally the object of pity,

admiration, and dislike. The former feeling was excited in the breasts of those who considered the dangerous position in which she was placed by her husband; almost unguarded in the midst of a false, designing world, ever ready to judge ill of the most innocent, the most virtuous. The second was felt by many from different causes—some admired her numerous excellent qualities; some her consideration,—her rank;—but most of the male part of her acquaintance found in her a charm, of which admiration faintly expressed the aroused feeling: while dislike was the offspring of those little minds, which can not see another more beautiful, or more pleasing, than themselves without anger. Every where she was surrounded by numbers who paid the homage her superior claims seemed to demand:—her box at the opera was the resort of a set of young and fashionable men;—her drawing-room their lounge;—while in the park or the gardens, they hovered around her like

thoughtless insects, attracted by the rays of a light; while she stood firm and unmoved in the centre, diffusing pleasure and satisfaction to each. As long as the many sought and obtained her smiles, the danger of her position was slight, for she was no longer a novice to the gaieties of society; she knew how to appreciate the words and actions of men of the world; she was a woman of strong and well-grounded principles; and she pursued her steady course amidst the dazzle of her career, notwithstanding the unwarrantable negligence of her husband.

But, now, a new courtier was about to be added to her list, and one far less indifferent than the rest. Frederic Sinclair was enabled, in consequence of a few weeks' leave of absence, to enter into many of the amusements of the period, and thus soon saw Mrs. Hamilton. They met as old friends; they met with mutual satisfaction, and each feeling perfectly justified

in a renewed acquaintance ; now that Maria was no longer free, they never turned a thought upon the hazardous game they were going to play. The previous year, Sinclair's uncle had had the misfortune to lose his only son, which had so greatly affected him that he only survived the shock a few months. His nephew had ever been a great favourite with him ; it was, accordingly, a matter of no surprise to find, on inspection, that by his will he had left Frederic a legacy of twenty thousand pounds, besides his estate in Devonshire, after the life-time of his widow. This unexpected good fortune enabled Frederic to place his beloved mother in the sphere he had scarcely dared hope ever to have the power or means of doing ; and this happy son had her constantly with him, and the delight, the satisfaction, of repaying her the devotion he had experienced in his youth. The young officer was not long in finding his way to Grosvenor Place, where he was most cordially received by Charles,

as well as Maria ; for, having no longer any object to compete for, the former welcomed him to his house and table with pleasure. Consequently, day after day, the Captain joined Mrs. Hamilton at various places of public resort, where the gay and the idle congregate for employment or pastime. He was constantly at her side, was her most privileged—most constant, guest. Her form was soon the first and sole object he sought, whether in the morning or evening entertainment ; and, unconsciously, her presence afforded him all the brilliancy of the scene. Imprudent man ! thus to bask in the radiance of an orb, the effulgence of which prevents you from observing the gulf which yawns beneath ! Weeks passed away and found him still an attendant at her daily levees, still a licensed intruder at all times ; but it found him not with the same unshackled feelings he had approached her with at first. Pity was associated with a tenderer sentiment ; for, during his many oppor-

tunities of being at her house, added to his observation in public, he failed not to discover that Mr. Hamilton did not treat her with that affection which she so eminently deserved. He could not fail to deprecate the husband, when he discovered this, or to pity the object of his neglect; and from pity insensibly emanated feelings akin to re-awakened love.

Maria, meanwhile, began to feel restless and uneasy, though she scarcely knew why; she was dejected when alone, and therefore naturally sought society, where she was equally brilliant, equally distingué, but not equally happy as before. Her husband had absented himself much from home; and, when he returned, was so gloomy in her presence, and callous to her attempted kindness, that it required some resolution to bear his unkindness. Thus rendered unhappy, it is not surprising that she derived much pleasure from her acquaintance with Captain Sinclair, whose easy manners and

delicate attentions conveyed an inconceivable, but hazardous, gratification to her; though, up to the present moment, she had not detected the origin of her uneasy feelings, or even taken alarm at them: happily, however, the period was not far distant when her eyes were to be opened to her peril—when the event will shew in what manner she conducted herself.

CHAPTER XIII.

It is a busy talking world,
That with licentious breath, blows like the wind
As freely on the palace as the cottage.

Slander meets no regard from noble minds ;
Only the base believe what the base utter.

THE day passed, with Mrs. Hamilton, amidst her usual round of fashionable avocations ; and seven o'clock found her waiting dinner for her husband. When he arrived, it was obvious to her that something had arisen to displease him, for he scarcely spoke to her for some time. The conversation flagged during the dinner, but some time after the servants had withdrawn, he abruptly asked whether she were going

out? She replied in the negative, and he instantly rejoined, "I heard you had ordered the horses to be harnessed ready to be put to the carriage by ten o'clock."

"I did so, Charles, but intended only to make use of it should you go out this evening."

"But suppose I meant to stay at home, Maria?"

"Then, dear Charles, I will ring and order the horses put up for the night," replied Maria, with a smile of pleasure, laying her hand on the handle of the bell as she spoke in prosecution of her design.

"Stay, stay, Maria; let me hear where you intended to go?"

"To the opera. I half promised Mrs. Sinclair to join her party; but since you remain here, Charles, I shall be much more gratified in staying with you." She pulled the bell, and, on the entrance of the servant, Mr. Hamilton said, before she had time to speak, "Johnstone, order the carriage

round immediately, to take your mistress and myself to the opera."

"But Charles," interposed the astonished Mrs. Hamilton, "you do not like the opera. Pray do not go on my account."

"May I not go with you if I wish it, Maria?" said the husband, somewhat peevishly.

"Certainly; but I feared you were putting force upon your own inclinations, for my amusement."

"Order the carriage, Johnstone," reiterated Mr. Hamilton in a tone of authority, which was unanswerable, and the man left the room accordingly. "Now, then, you will get ready," he added, turning to his lady, "it is past nine, and you will not be too early."

Mrs. Hamilton retired, not a little at a loss to account for this sudden decision. "How surprised Sinclair will be," thought she, "to see me escorted by Charles." Her ideas thus unconsciously turned towards

one who occupied by far a greater degree of interest in her mind than she was aware of, or than would have accorded with her notions of rectitude, had she probed her heart.

As Mrs. Hamilton was handed into her box by her husband, she said, gaily, "I have brought a proselyte with me, Mrs. Sinclair, and I hope you will assist me in his entire conversion."

"That will be scarcely necessary, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, since you have undertaken to bring him over to the universal opinion, stimulated by the exquisite tones of Pasta."

They were now seated, and while Charles conversed with Mrs. Sinclair, and at times carelessly spoke to others of the party, the captain leant on the back of Mrs. Hamilton's chair, listening with undisguised satisfaction to her animated discourse. The evening soon drew to a close, and, after promising to meet her friends in the

park on the following day, Maria accompanied her impatient husband to the carriage, in which they were no sooner seated than she kindly hoped that he had not found the evening tedious. Charles acknowledged that he had been more amused than usual, but, as he did not volunteer any conversation, and all her attempts to draw him from his taciturnity proving abortive, some time before they reached Grosvenor Place they had sunk into silence. His evident ill-humour was no novelty, and Maria had ever found it the most prudential course, in such cases, to leave him entirely to himself. During the opera she had observed something was wrong, from frequently noticing that she was the object of his frowning scrutiny; but no explanation of his displeasure passed between them, and sleep soon obviated the circumstances of the evening from her mind.

True to her arrangement, Maria drove to the gardens in the Regent's Park the next

afternoon, where she found several of her acquaintances waiting for her near the entrance, from among whom the reader will not be surprised to hear Frederic started to her side the instant she descended from her carriage. She joined Mrs. Sinclair, and, with that lady and several of her usual fashionable adherents, she perambulated the gay spot for some time. The place soon became extremely crowded ; and, having stopped to examine and purchase an article at one of the stalls, she discovered that in the interim her friends had quitted the tent, and that she was alone. She walked on, looking on all sides for the face of one she knew, and in a few minutes recognized Frederic Sinclair, who said, as he approached her through the dense masses of people, " Ah ! Mrs. Hamilton, I thought I should find you somewhere in this tent. I have just met an old Indian friend, and stopped to speak to him, by which means I lost you all ; but," he continued, as he

looked round, “ where is my good mother ? are you alone ? ”

“ Yes, indeed,” replied his fair friend ; I have missed her, somehow. I thought, perhaps, you were sent in search of me.”

“ I expected to find you together,” returned Sinclair ; “ but as you are as unfortunate as myself, I shall find additional pleasure in joining her from being of use to you. Which way shall we proceed ? ”

“ There I am entirely at a loss, Captain Sinclair, but this path affords us as probable a chance as any other.”

They turned down it accordingly, and, after a quarter of an hour’s walk, Maria determined to return to her carriage ; she was, notwithstanding, induced to defer doing so for a few minutes by Sinclair’s proposition to remain stationary a little while, in hopes his mother, who was undoubtedly pursuing the same futile object with themselves, might pass. For this purpose, Mrs. Hamilton placed herself on

a seat, and both turned their eyes in every direction in hopes of meeting with their friends. The bench Maria had selected was placed in front of a large bush, so thick that nothing could be observed through it; and she, being at first intent upon the passing objects, did not observe that the voices of some persons on the contrary side announced the situation of other seats. The conversation, however, did not regard her, and she was too much occupied with her own affairs to pay any attention to the few words which reached her ear; but, when she was silent a few minutes, while the captain advanced two or three paces to have a more extensive view up the walk, she could not avoid hearing a part, at least, of what was said. "But I blame her husband entirely," said one of the party; to which an indistinct answer was returned, and again she heard these words: "He is always with her, paying as much, if not more, attention than her husband ought to

do." At this moment Frederic rejoined her and said, as he sat down, "They are still invisible, so I think we will only wait five minutes longer." He drew out his watch and held it in his hand as they again looked around; their pause made the voices audible, and Maria distinctly caught the next sentence; "I certainly fear, unless Mrs. Hamilton sees her danger soon, the designs of the captain will have proved to be too powerful for her heart and for —." Maria heard no more! the boiling tide of blood which mounted to her head appeared to deprive her of the power of understanding; she started, and, as she hastily rose, scarcely knowing what she did, her eyes were almost unconsciously directed towards her companion; perhaps hoping to discover by his looks if the fatal words had also attracted his attention. Our soldier's ears had too truly been saluted by the same unpleasant information, but, with characteristic firmness, he preserved his composure; and,

quitting his seat with an air of carelessness, he now stood beside her, when he could not fail to remark her confusion; yet he retained sufficient command over the muscles of his countenance to prevent her sustaining more annoyance from a discovery of the realization of her fears. " You are now tired of waiting, Mrs. Hamilton, shall I see you to your carriage ? " he demanded, with the view of relieving her from her awkward situation. She bowed only, her tongue seemed paralysed, and her tremor was so great that, unwilling as she might be, she was obliged to accept the support of her companion's arm. " I fear you are not well," he said, as they walked onwards, and he felt her whole frame shake. " Can I get you any thing ? "

" No, thank you," she replied with an effort; " I shall be better presently; the heat, I fancy, has been too much for me." No more was said, and in a little time they gained the entrance of the gardens,

where, greatly to her distress, several of her party assembled round her, with numberless inquiries as to where she had been; at the same time detailing in how many places they had sought for her. Sinclair immediately stood forth her champion, and telling them the agitation of having been left by them, together with the heat and fatigue occasioned by her walk, had considerably indisposed her, and he requested some one to look for the carriage. Mrs. Sinclair kindly offered to accompany her home, but this she declined, having partly recovered her self-possession, declaring a little rest would soon restore her. The young officer handed her to her carriage, and then stood a moment until she drove off, when his bow, if less cordial than usual, was infinitely more profound; and a flash of something like scorn passed rapidly over his manly brow, as he turned and mounted his cabriolet.

As Mrs. Hamilton proceeded home, whi-

ther she had given immediate orders to be driven, she leaned back and endeavoured to compose herself, but her efforts were useless. Indeed, the more she contemplated her late humiliating position, the more she felt crushed. That such a subject should be openly canvassed was agony to her. She tried to reflect, but to no purpose; she fancied every one she met looked upon her with an eye of reproach; and never did she hail her approach to her splendid, but heartless residence, with more unfeigned joy.

• Alone in her boudoir, she could retrace the past; she could not even hope Captain Sinclair was unacquainted with the cause of her agitation, since she herself had so plainly heard the odious imputation, and shame dyed her cheek with crimson, while tears of mortification rushed into her eyes at the idea. She wept long and bitterly. She wept from various causes, anger, sorrow, and wounded pride, struggled in her

breast. She was unwilling to believe he had intended to make her miserable by gaining her affections ; but, however averse to the unvarnished fact, she was compelled, reluctantly to acknowledge that, if such had been his intention, his attempt had been partly crowned with success ; and that she had suffered the citadel of her heart to be invaded. She felt she had not repelled the insidious enemy ; had not maintained a vigilant guard to protect her against his attacks, but had weakly permitted him to gain admittance to her strong hold without considering the danger of his so doing ; and now she was suddenly and violently apprised of her situation by the harsh voice of a stranger, and awakened to the cruel certainty of its being in the power of the enemy.

Mrs. Hamilton could not disguise from herself that her few weeks' acquaintance with Frederic had renewed feelings which years had deadened, and which, owing to

her husband's conduct, had too easily been rekindled. "Have I not," thought she, "permitted this dangerous friend too constant, too uncontrolled, an ingress to my house, and allowed him to confer more gratification by his society than was consistent with my character? Have I not received attentions from him which, from others, were alike unmarked and unrequited, but at his hands were too gratifying? Oh! yes, I see it all now—I see my guilty weakness. Oh! how he must despise—how he must pity me." Here she again yielded to her grief for some time, when Charles's evident displeasure the night before crossed her mind. "Was it possible he could be jealous?" she asked herself. Conscience told her such might be the case, though most earnestly did she hope she was mistaken; but her fears, once roused, saw evil in every circumstance, and produced the alarm that he must be suspicious of her partiality

for Sinclair, since it was noticed by strangers.

Most painfully did she feel the manner in which she had been warned of her error, yet she felt thankful she had not continued longer in ignorance of it, since her penchant had not yet become too serious for amendment, and she had strength to retrace her steps. Having thus reviewed her conduct and fully deplored it, she threw herself upon her knees, and poured out her prayers and supplications before her Almighty Judge, while tears of penitence fell on her clasped hands.

For a short period no sound was heard in that apartment, save the soft breathing of the noble-minded woman, whose countenance, as she rose, beamed with holy hope, such firm and high resolve, that it was easy to perceive her determination was taken, and that, in knowing her peril, Mrs. Hamilton had already half achieved the con-

quest of herself. Finally, she laid down such a line for the future as should effectually prevent a recurrence of so mortifying a situation, and it will not be doubted, we hope, that she had firmness to carry such into execution.

Mrs. Hamilton was roused from the train of deep thought into which she had fallen, by the clock on the chimney-piece striking the hour. She looked up, and, seeing that it was six o'clock, she recollect ed that she was engaged to accompany Charles to a dinner party. What was to be done? she was neither ready, nor willing, to enter into society that evening, yet how to excuse herself to her husband she knew not, consequently, after a moment's hesitation, she decided upon attending him, and even then to commence her great design of self-command.

Thus laudably inclined, she joined the party, and, if her spirits were not so elastic

as usual, she easily accounted for the change, by urging her fatigue, which the pallor of her countenance fully corroborated.

CHAPTER XIV.

Alas ! that pang will be severe
Which bids us part to meet no more,
Which tears me far from one so dear,
Departing for a distant shore.

BYRON.

LET US now, for a brief space, follow the dragoon as he drove slowly along with the nonchalance peculiar to gentlemen of his cloth. He was no less startled than Mrs. Hamilton by what he had heard, though he felt infinitely more indignant at the calumny. He acknowledged that he might have been betrayed by the dream of pleasure, into an over-strained attendance in the train of his friend ; but his mind re-

volted from the idea of obtaining undue influence over her affections. He convicted himself of having experienced a dangerous satisfaction in her society, but had he entertained the most distant idea her happiness was hazarded, no consideration should have prevented his resignation of her acquaintance. "What a blind, weak fool, I have been," thought he, "not to have perceived the abyss towards which I was running headlong! An abyss, also, from which I have already once saved myself—only it seems to turn round and get still more deeply involved. But means of escape are yet left me—I will fly from temptation and contempt—her contempt—which must necessarily follow the charge of my evil intentions. Painful as it may be for her to harbour such an opinion of me, it is, perhaps, better for our mutual safety she should not be undeceived; and I must devise some means for obviating the unpleasantness of our frequent meetings.

Thank Heaven ! I see where my folly has carried me, in time to avert its fatal consequences, and I will not shrink from the salutary remedy." Having made these reflections on his way to Kensington Gardens, where he met several friends, he gave his Tiger the reins, and, accompanying them, soon seemed to dismiss this disagreeable subject from his mind.

It was yet early next day, when Mrs. Sinclair called in Grosvenor Place, anxious to hear how Mrs. Hamilton was, and she had scarcely satisfied herself of the improvement of her health, when she hastened to inform her that she had every reason to fear her son's regiment was, immediately, to be removed to Ireland.

" He seems charmed with the prospect," pursued the mother, " and, though I cannot say I have so enthusiastic an idea of an Irish residence, I am rejoiced to see he is contented to leave his country again."

" But Ireland, my dear madam," said

Maria, "is so near, that you may easily accompany captain Sinclair, and, if you wish to hear a pleasing picture of my father land, I can draw you such an one as will almost make you decide upon going."

"Oh ! I have no repugnance to any removal with my Frederic ;" returned Mrs. Sinclair, smiling, "we are willing to make any sacrifice for those we love ; he it is who wishes me to stay among my friends, though I tell him, to watch over him, and administer to his happiness, is "my being's aim and end."

"Of course you will leave us then, Mrs. Sinclair ?"

"Probably ; as he will, undoubtedly, concede the point, knowing how anxious I am not to lose his society. As soon as I know we are to go, for certain, I will let you know. Frederic is now gone to the Horse Guards. Shall I see you at Mrs. B—'s to-night ?"

"No," replied Mrs. Hamilton, "I could

not accept her invitation, from a previous engagement with a friend of my husband."

" Well, then, I will tell Frederic to call and let you know—but I must beg you to excuse a short visit, my dear Mrs. Hamilton, for I have an appointment at one o'clock ; but I could not resist the temptation of ascertaining, personally, how you were, after your fatigue, and of telling you this troublesome Irish business."

Compliments and leave-taking terminated the visit, and Maria was left to think over the news she had heard, which afforded her both pleasure and pain. The former from the prospect of being spared the annoyance of meeting the captain much longer, and the latter from finding that he considered it so eligible to quit the scene of his cruel attempt. " No doubt," she argued to herself, " he discovers it is advisable to fly, now he is unmasked, and I hope, both for his sake and mine, we may meet no more ; my duties are difficult ones, and I must take

care I am not again tempted from their harsh, but virtuous, performance."

Several days passed without Mrs. Hamilton seeing Frederic, for although he called for the sake of appearance, it was at such time when she was most likely to be from home; he also persuaded his mother to write to Maria, instead of his paying her a visit, to inform her of their speedy departure; and he succeeded in avoiding her in society, until the day previous to that on which he was to quit London. His mother had frequently expressed surprise at his not going to Mr. Hamilton's so often as formerly, to which he pleaded his variety of employment before leaving England.

On the last day, however, he coincided with her in thinking he was under the necessity of calling to take leave, and accordingly set out, about one o'clock, for the house where he had spent so many delightful, but, unpropitious hours for his peace. All his former pleasurable sensa-

tions were now destroyed—justly annihilated—and his actual feelings concentrated into a firm resolution to act as his duty, as his conscience, pointed out. His natural powers of mind had already enabled him to crush that interest, which he had found lurking in his heart, for the fascinating Mrs. Hamilton—he had discovered, upon inspection, that her image was like a fungus in a noble mansion, which, once rooted, makes its rapid, but unseen, ravages, in every direction, and, if not discovered and exterminated permanently, will, ere long, sap the very foundations, until the fabric becomes worthless, and falls, irretrievably, to decay.

Thus Sinclair, in fancied security, had permitted Maria to engage his thoughts, until she had insensibly entwined herself around his heart, in a manner to endanger his well-being, until the door of conviction was opened, and he saw the destructive poison. Then, like a good workman, he

struck instantly at the origin of the evil, and effectually eradicated it; not, certainly, without an effort. No! the wound might, for a time, be tender—the struggle for mastery be great—but the salve of rectitude must soothe the first, while virtue must support and encourage the last.

With genuine, honourable, upright, and steady intentions, he resolved to meet Mrs. Hamilton as usual, to prevent, if possible, the awkwardness which would probably attend his visit, and, by so doing, benefit both. Thus prepared, Captain Sinclair mounted the steps, and applied his hand to the knocker of No. —, Grosvenor Place; not without a secret hope, it must be acknowledged, that Mrs. Hamilton might not be at home. The door opened, and his hope vanished, for the array of domestics convinced him it was fallacious, and he followed his conductor, not with his usual elasticity, but with the heavy step of dogged determination.

The drawing-room was void, and his summoned courage was unavailing ; he walked to the window as the servant retired to inform his mistress of his arrival, and gazed vacantly on the opposite view of St. James's Park. At another time, he had not hesitated to invade her boudoir ; but now the case was altered. His quality he felt to be that of a common acquaintance, and, as such, he must wait her appearance. A light step was heard approaching—he turned mechanically, and Maria entered, pale, calm, and dignified, yet courteous. He looked at her almost with astonishment ; he expected, at least, some embarrassment, some shew of feeling, but no ! all was composed, and he instantly hailed the circumstance with satisfaction as affording assistance to his conduct. He took his cue from her, and adopted a similar manner. The visit was prolonged much beyond the period either had believed would have been possible ; for, in a very

few minutes, each acquired confidence in themselves, and in the other, and conversed with the ease, though not the unreserve, of their former acquaintance: perhaps, also, each dreaded the struggle of the last moment for their still recently formed resolutions ; but delay availed not; half an hour had elapsed, and Frederic rose to take his leave. Maria's countenance underwent a momentary change as she gave her hand, which was so cold that her visiter could scarcely refrain from a start. It was like the collision of fire with ice, for he felt in a raging fever.

The parting was hasty, but in character with their distant behaviour, and both felt, as the house door closed behind Frederic, that a great and fearful conquest over self had been maintained and effected with credit and satisfaction.

The Captain stepped forward with his usual quickness and agility, under the influence of that contentment which the sense of having acted rightly ever confers. One

week from that period found him an inhabitant of the "gem of the ocean," where, for the present, we will leave him to the delectable employment of Still-hunting, White Boys, &c. &c.

CHAPTER XV.

For man, to man
So oft unjust, is always so to woman.

BYRON.

MRS. HAMILTON exerted herself much for some days to shake off the anxiety which had arisen from the late painful discovery ; and, although suffering bodily and mentally, contrived to conceal from those around her the existence of a grief, which was sensibly augmented by her husband's frequent harshness, still more felt from this time, as he gradually confined himself more to home the remainder of the time they stayed in town. That might comprehend a space of

two months, during which he generally went with her into company, with the view, she fancied, of watching her, though she had no reason to form such an opinion from his language. Frequently peevish, irritable, and tyrannical, he yet never insulted her, by avowing any jealousy; and she was more able to cope with his ill-temper, from its having been changing for the worse for many months past, though on what account she was ignorant.

When Charles formerly pursued his own pleasures, she had seen so little of him that she had not felt, and consequently had not paid much attention to his indifferent temper. Now the case was otherwise ; and she had many little trials to endure, which called all her forbearance, and natural sweetness of disposition, into action.

August now approached, and all who were able began to leave London. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton repaired to a villa which the former had purchased on the banks of

the Thames, near Henley ; and for some weeks he continued to enjoy apparently the relief afforded by the change of scene. His wife's kindness seemed to have worked favourably upon his mind, and she was encouraged to proceed in her wish to render him more affectionate. From this state of comparative happiness in his society, she was suddenly diverted by an unforeseen event, which in one moment dashed the scarcely tasted cup from her lips, for which she had so long pined, so long struggled.

She was sitting alone one morning, when a servant entered, and, to her infinite surprise, requested directions relative to the packing of his master's clothes.

"Packing Mr. Hamilton's clothes!" she repeated.

"Yes, ma'am, you have the key of the room where the portmanteau is, which master always uses when he travels."

"But I know nothing of his going away, Johnstone: what induces you to think he is?"

"From my master ordering me, ma'am, to put up clothes sufficient for a fortnight, immediately. Do you not know, ma'am, that Thomas is gone to take a place in the coach?"

"No, indeed, I did not, Johnstone ;" replied Maria, rising quickly. "Where is Mr. Hamilton ?"

"In his dressing-room, ma'am."

"Very well—here is the key to get the portmanteau," she said, as she left the apartment to learn the occasion of so sudden a removal. She encountered her husband as she was on her way to his room, and instantly accosted him, saying "Are you really going away to-day, Charles?"

"Ah, Maria ! I was coming to tell you, I must go to town directly. This letter, which I have just received, relates to business of the greatest importance, which must be attended to. You must get some one to stay with you, for I shall not be back for some days."

They had now entered the library, and Maria said, "Surely the business cannot prevent you returning here at night, Charles ; there are coaches both early and late, besides, there is the carriage."

"I rather think I shall have to go beyond London ; therefore, certainly, cannot return to-night, Maria. Very likely, also, I may take the

present opportunity of paying Lord Glenartney his yearly visit ; but, of this, I can inform you by letter ; so do not expect me before you see me."

" Charles," said Mrs. Hamilton mildly, but sorrowfully ; " you cannot deceive me ; I am sure you are not going on business only. You are meditating leaving me in the way you did last year."

" You are unjust, Maria ; when you see this letter, which I assure you is the sole cause of my journey."

" I must believe you, replied Mrs. Hamilton ; " but I feared, as you had ordered Johnstone to pack so many things, that you were likely to be absent a long time."

The cheek of her husband was overspread by a momentary paleness, as he replied, " Your fears are your bane, I believe, Mrs. Hamilton --always aroused before there is any occasion: Suppose I did give such directions ; is that any reason I should be thus importuned ? Heaven knows ! my home is unpleasant enough without being obliged to stay in it for ever, or required to give an account of my intended proceedings, which, in the present instance, I cannot, being ignorant of them myself."

Maria's countenance fell ; she saw farther remonstrance was useless, and she turned aside to conceal a tear, which swam in her eye, in consequence of this speech ; perhaps the most direct avowal of his sentiments, which had ever passed his lips. Selfish as he was, his heart smote him for his unkindness, when she gently enquired where she should write to him, and he rejoined in a softened tone, " You may direct to Ibbotson's, if you have any thing to say before you hear from me ; which I think is not likely, as you shall certainly know soon whether I go on to Scotland."

" Of course you will sleep in Grosvenor Place, Charles : the person there will get every thing ready, if you only let her know in time, and you can sit in the back parlour."

" Oh no ; I shall not go there, Maria ; an hotel is the best place for me, and I mean to go to one while I stay in town."

At this moment the servant entered to say that the coach would be at the door in five minutes ; and Mr. Hamilton demanded if his portmanteau were ready.

" It will be, sir, by that time," replied the domestic.

"Get my great coat, Johnstone, for me to take, and bring my hat and gloves."

The man withdrew to obey, and Maria said, "Have you every thing you want, Charles?"

"Yes, I think so." He appeared to consider a moment; then looking at her, and seeing she still regarded him wishfully, he said, as he kissed her kindly, nay even fondly, "You almost make me wish this letter had not come, Maria, although it has afforded me much pleasure, by apprising me of an event to which I have looked forward with anxiety."

"Let me, then, hope, dear Charles, that such a feeling may hasten your return."

"Undoubtedly it shall ; I wish necessity did not call me away. Good-bye ; I hear the coach ; I will write before long." He pressed her hand, looked at her again with an affection she had seldom experienced, in which glance, however, there was mingled an unaccountable wildness Mrs. Hamilton did not understand, and then left the room.

After having wished him farewell, Maria stood still in the place he had left her, and lent an attentive ear to the rattle of the coach

steps, as they were put up; the door was closed with a slam: "All's right," was echoed by several voices, in different keys, and the vehicle departed. Maria sunk on the sofa, and wept, it might be difficult to say from what cause, though many vexatious circumstances combined to overcome her; one or two of which, perhaps, we may as well point out, in case the reader should not already have discovered them.

In the first place, she was disappointed, greatly disappointed, at Charles's abrupt departure, at the moment she was flattering herself her attempts to attach him to her were likely to be more fortunate than hitherto; when she thought he seemed more happy in her society, and at the same time that she was endeavouring to repair her self-accusing injustice with regard to Sinclair. With pain, not unmixed with surprise, she had heard him speak in such terms of dislike of his home, as he had never done before; and she felt an apprehension, for the first time, of the cause of his journey —his dreaded, yet unusual manner, on quitting her, alarmed her, and an indefinable dread of

unknown evil crept over her: then, again, she thought how lonely she was, her father and brother many miles distant, while a few acquaintance only were within reach. The latter circumstance was not one calculated to affect her greatly, in general, but now it served to increase her dejection, and for some minutes she indulged it unrestrained.

But Maria was not a desponding character, and she endeavoured to console herself by a glance at the less gloomy side of the picture. He might really only be called away by his affairs, from which her fears had given birth to a vision she almost condemned herself for daring to harbour: she recollects his promise of writing to her, and more especially she recalled, with satisfaction, the uncommon kindness of his last words: and in this review Mrs. Hamilton, by degrees, found consolation. She busied herself in numerous ways, and soon succeeded in making the smiling figure of hope her last companion. In a few days she dispatched a letter to Charles, which was answered after an interval of a week. A general tone of kindness ran throughout, which carried balm

to the heart of the solitary wife. No mention, however, was made of his return, or, indeed, of his future proceedings, consequently she concluded it was Mr. Hamilton's intention to remain some time longer in London: but this could only be supposition, as she did not immediately reply, requesting information on the subject; but, as her husband hated writing, and very seldom troubled himself with any correspondence, she having frequently found that, after being so troubled, his communication testified his distaste of the employment, that he complained of want of time, or did not disguise his having been disturbed and displeased by something.

During his former absences, it was therefore a very rare occurrence for her to receive any letter from him, and she was not surprised that, day after day, and week after week, passed on, without any further account of him; although she had not failed to write to the hotel he had desired. In the mean time, her thoughts were partly absorbed by her brother's expected return: Mortimer, after having wandered over most part of Southern Europe, and even visited Africa, returned to the French

capital, whence his father and sister learnt his intention of proceeding to England in the course of a short time. The affection which had ever subsisted between Mortimer and Maria was of that high and noble character which emanates from esteem, and a just appreciation of the intrinsic merits of each other. They mutually felt a firm dependence in the judgment, the love, and the worth of their best friend ; and it, in consequence, was with heartfelt pleasure that Mrs. Hamilton anticipated his arrival, rendered still more gratifying to her from his long absence.

Lord Fitz Eustace also apprised her that he proposed to meet his son immediately on his landing, and thence to proceed together to Henley. Here was ample employment, both mental and physical, for her, and as she might expect the travellers in three or four days from that time, her suspense was not likely to be of long continuance. Upon the receipt of this delightful news, Mrs. Hamilton did not like to trust any more to a letter, but resolved to go up to London, at least, to ascertain if Charles were there or not, which, from his con-

tinued silence, she almost feared was improbable. Accordingly she entered her carriage at an early hour the following morning, and drove first to the hotel to which she had directed the letters she had written. To her inquiry, whether Mr. Hamilton were there, she was answered in the negative by the waiter, whom she called to the carriage to interrogate herself. "Mr. Hamilton," added the man, "has not been here the last five weeks."

"And pray how long did he then remain?" inquired the anxious wife.

"Not more than a couple of hours, ma'am; in fact, he only dined here before he went off by the Edinburgh mail."

"Edinburgh?" repeated Maria.

"Yes, ma'am."

"And pray," rejoined she, after a momentary pause, "have not any letters come here for him within that time?"

"Yes, ma'am, certainly; but being ignorant of the address of Mr. Hamilton, we have not been able to forward them. We are very particular in taking care of any papers or cards left for him, as he is always in the habit of

coming, and having many letters addressed here for him."

"Could you oblige me by letting me see those you have at present. I wish to know if a letter I sent is still lying useless." Maria's request was quickly complied with, and she soon discovered her own unfortunate epistles, among many others, as she looked over the parcel ; the handwriting on one of these particularly struck her, and caused an involuntary pang of distrust in her bosom. It was directed in the small delicate hand of a female, and Maria felt convinced she had never before seen it, as for an instant she contemplated it with anxiety, ere she replaced them all in the hands of the waiter ; at the same time returning an answer in the negative to his demand, whether she could inform him when Mr. Hamilton would return.

Thus unsuccessful, she no longer delayed going to her own residence, where it was necessary she should wait some time for her horses to rest. It was now the beginning of October, and every place looked deserted, most of the houses were shut up, and the streets were

empty; in short, all around seemed in conformity with Mrs. Hamilton's feelings, which were those of anxiety and disappointment. She was now satisfied her husband had left her with a far different motive than the arrangement of pressing business; but the thought of Lord Glenartney's sudden illness, which she indulged for one brief moment, was quickly dispelled by his total silence on that head, and continued absence. "Perhaps," thought she, as she shrank into the corner of her conveyance, "perhaps he feared to tell me of his lordship's illness or death at the present moment," for her health had been indifferent for some time past, partly brought on by anxiety at being still without any hopes of a family, a circumstance which she had contemplated as the means of procuring her the felicity she desired, but had never enjoyed in her matrimonial state; but should he have been so considerate, she could furnish no reason for concealing it so long, and she trembled to think any less creditable cause detained him.

She felt it was now hopeless to seek Charles in London, and it grieved her to think her father

and her beloved Mortimer would arrive before she could summon him from Scotland, should he be there, and they would witness her desertion, and probably fathom her domestic discomfort. This sorely affected her, since it had been her great object hitherto, in which ~~she~~ had succeeded, to veil the unwelcome truth from the knowledge of her relations. From Mortimer she feared concealment would be impossible, since his attachment to her would cause him to expect an equal devotion in her husband.

She was aroused from her gloomy reflections and forebodings by the carriage stopping; she cast her eyes up at the windows, and saw they were all shut, the loud ring and thundering knock given by her footman reverberated wildly through the almost unfurnished abode, conveying a chill, a sense of desolation to her heart, which tended to augment her previous disposition of loneliness.

The woman, who kept the house in the absence of the family, looked, she fancied, more old, more demure, than formerly, as she opened the door, and having admitted her lady, pro-

ceeded to unbar the shutters in one of the rooms.

Mrs. Hamilton felt it was almost unnecessary to inquire for Charles, but she determined not to be overcome by her feelings, and immediately interrogated the woman, whose answer soon annihilated the ray of hope which was afforded by this last resource. Mr. Hamilton had not called at the house since he left it in July to go to Henley. Maria turned away, certainly not surprised. How could she be? but, sensible that her last feeble chance was destroyed, a chance on which she had not calculated as likely to produce any favourable result; and yet, when deprived of it by the voice of reality, she seemed to have relinquished her only valuable possession. So certain is it that the mind clings to phantoms, and as long as a shadow of hope remains, is tempted to look forward to a brilliant future, even though sense and reason declare no expectation of good can or ought to be formed on such a basis.

The dispirited Maria, in a few hours, found herself again in her country abode, when she

lost no time in inditing a letter to Charles, which she sent off to Glenartney Castle, in hopes that he might receive it there, and be induced to return soon, although she now entirely gave up the idea of his being with her on the arrival of the travellers. She entreated him not to delay answering her if he should still be unable to come home, expressed her hopes that illness was not the cause of his absence ; but carefully avoided any expression which might be construed into reproach for his conduct, or which might appear to allude, in the slightest degree, to her just anxiety at his resolute neglect. This business performed, she felt more happy, and turned her thoughts to the grateful contemplation of her re-union with those she loved.

A hurried note from Lord Fitz Eustace, on the second day, announced his safe landing, and informed her that she might look hourly for his arrival, since, as soon as he was joined by his son, he should not lose a moment in setting out for Henley. This letter, kind and delightful as it was, far from tranquilizing Mrs. Hamilton, only contributed to

heighten the disorder of her nervous system. Deeply affected by the ill success of her journey to London, and the fears to which it had given rise, added to previous delicate health, and attendant low spirits, she was scarcely able to bear the anticipated pleasure, particularly as no precise period was specified for its occurrence. Every noise made her start convulsively, the sound of a wheel, were it ever so slight, made her tremble and turn pale, and it was many minutes, nay, sometimes an hour, before she could recover from these agitations. In vain she condemned her weakness, in vain strove to repress these sensations, the debilitated body was unable to bear the shocks from which her firm and noble mind still rose triumphant, and essayed, unsuccessfully, to retain that empire over its earthly tenement which it had hitherto possessed in other trying circumstances.

CHAPTER XVI.

For thee, my own sweet sister, in thy heart
I know myself secure, as thou in mine;
We were, and are,—I am, even as thou art—
Beings who ne'er each other can resign.

BYRON.

THUS passed three whole days, during which, it will be easily imagined, Mrs. Hamilton had not omitted to assure Lord Fitz Eustace of the joy she felt at the near prospect of seeing two such dearly beloved friends; mentioning, at the same time, her regret at Charles's being from home. It was towards the close of the day, perhaps verging on six o'clock, that Maria was sitting, pensively, in the large drawing-room, which looked doubly dreary, as the flickering fire, every

now and then relieving the twilight by a bright flame, plainly determined the outline of the apartment, and shone on the sole occupant, who, with her head resting on her hand, looked thoughtfully at the devouring element, as it consumed the coal, and piece after piece fell beneath the power of the little flame, which gleamed fitfully at intervals. Suddenly she rose, as a gust of wind swept by the house, and, while a ray of joy lighted up her countenance, she approached the window, and again was still—a moment proclaimed that her ears had not deceived her—the sound, borne from a distance by the evening breeze, she now heard distinctly—a carriage rapidly approached—every second seemed to add to the throbbing of her pulses, and she actually leaned against the table for support, as it stopped at the door. She would have rung the bell in her eagerness, but dared not relinquish her hold. “How foolish I am!” said she, as she strove to walk across the room, but before she had taken a step for that purpose, a well known voice was heard pronouncing her name

in the hall—the door was hastily thrown open—a glare of light burst in—her eyes filled with tears, and her efforts were ineffectual to advance towards Mortimer, who now entered. With what tenderness, with what rapture, did she not receive and return his caresses! how sweet were the endearments she had so long felt the want of! her father too, was all kindness, and the heart of the solitary was comforted.

She was no longer alone, or in the sad company of her uneasy thoughts; she had those by her side who loved, who cherished, her; whose gaze became melancholy, when they saw her pallid cheek and worn appearance. “ You think me altered, Mortimer,” she said, pressing his hand fondly. “ Your looks tell me so, but you will see me better to-morrow; your arrival has hurried me.”

“ Though it is three years since we parted, dear Maria,” answered her brother, “ perhaps I was so unconscionable as to expect to find you the same as when I left, without considering the alterations of time and circumstance. I did not hear you had been ill.”

"Neither have I,—but, having been much alone lately, I believe I have permitted my mind to dwell too long upon a subject of some anxiety to me. You, however, are also changed in appearance, Mortimer, but it is for the better—my father, too, looks well," added she, affectionately. "How did you leave our friends in Ireland, dear sir?"

"All well, Maria: but where is Hamilton?"

"Yes," said Mortimer, "where is your husband, Maria?"

"In Scotland, I believe," replied Mrs. Hamilton, calmly, "but I expect he will be home soon, as I wrote to request he would return, as soon as I learnt it was your kind intention to come to us."

"And has he been away long?" asked Mortimer.

"About six weeks, I think, therefore his uncle must be satisfied with the length of his visit."

"Why did you not go with him, Maria? The change would have done you good."

"I fancy," replied she, "Glenartney is very strange, and does not like female society, for

which reason I never accompany Charles. But pray ring, Mortimer," she continued, anxious to change the subject, "and we will enquire why we are waiting so long for our dinner."

As Mrs. Hamilton had feared, so it happened, that her brother's penetration, aided by certain accounts received from his father, soon convinced him that there existed some absorbing cause for her altered health and spirits; jealous as he was, and had ever been, of her happiness, he failed not to watch her with the greatest solicitude. He quickly perceived how studiously she avoided the subject of her husband's absence, how anxiously she looked for, and yet almost seemed to dread his return. He heard, with unfeigned surprise, that Maria had received but one letter from him since his departure, and he discovered, by something she said inadvertently, that his journey was precipitate and unexpected. Her evident reserve, on every thing appertaining to Mr. Hamilton, prevented his ascertaining many particulars from her, for he justly felt a respect for the patient suffering so strongly marked in her behaviour.

He had already been three or four days at Henley, and neither Charles, nor a letter from him, had yet made their appearance; and, he now, for the first time, hinted his uneasiness to his father. Both he and Lord Fitz Eustace had witnessed the impatience with which Maria had expected the post—both had seen how great had been her disappointment, when she found no letter crowned her hopes—and both equally pitied her, and blamed him who could thus wound a heard so good, so kind, so worthy.

She had quitted the room, perhaps, for the purpose of concealing a vexation she scarcely knew how to controul, and Mortimer said, after pondering a moment on the subject, “ Is not this rigid silence strange, my Lord, on the part of Hamilton? One letter in six weeks seems to me but slender attention to a young, affectionate wife.”

“ You say true, Mortimer, it is strange, but you are unacquainted with Charles’s character, or you would dismiss your surprise. I trust, for her and for his own sake, he loves your sister; but, I confess there have been

moments, when I have doubted whether he entertained affection for any living soul beside himself."

"Good Heavens! and yet you consented to, nay, urged, the marriage?"

"A lover, Mortimer, is always under the influence of his passion; he screens his faults and follies from the eye of his mistress, and, until the union had taken place, I marked not his unbounded selfishness. Now, my opinion is this, if Hamilton have nothing else to do, he will reply to that letter Maria wrote, but if other things invite his attention, he will delay writing, day after day, until both your and my patience is fairly exhausted."

"That climax will soon arrive, sir," replied Mortimer, "for all I have heard has already exhausted mine. Maria deserves to be happy, and, I am sure, his want of kindness is now rankling like a thorn in her heart. Her illness is that of the mind, and, unless there were some real cause for it, my sister is not one to be overcome. I own, sir, I am uneasy on her account; there has been more than double the time necessary for her to hear from Scot-

land ; and, I think, your influence might produce a favourable result. True, as she says, he may be ill ; but, then, surely some one might hold the pen for him, and, if he loved her, he would be willing to allay her fears. Do you not think you could do something in the business, my lord ? ”

Lord Fitz Eustace thought a little, and then replied, “ I have my doubts, Mortimer, whether he be in Scotland at all.”

“ Your doubts, my lord—where do you think he is, then ? ”

“ Nay, that I cannot tell ; but I think his frequent journies, taken no one knows where, augur anything but good.”

“ Has he often left her before ? ” enquired the young man in a deep voice.

“ This is not the first time, Mortimer, though I cannot say how frequently this has occurred. It is dangerous to interfere between a man and his wife ; but I can write, if you think it will have the effect we desire.”

“ You know the man, sir, and are the best judge of that. All I know is that, if he have harboured a thought injurious to Maria,

neither will nor power shall be wanting to avenge her: while she has a brother's arm to protect her, she shall not innocently suffer."

"Gently, my dear boy," replied his father. "I know your love for your sister will incite you to anything; but be not rash. Let us wait a few days longer, before we do anything, and, even then, she must be consulted."

"Certainly; but will you not write directly?"

"No; we will see what to-morrow brings forth."

His lordship having thus decided, Mortimer was induced to comply, and another day revolved. The hour for the delivery of the letters again arrived, and the countenance of her relatives glowed with pleasure, as several were handed to Mrs. Hamilton: they watched her narrowly, as her eye rapidly scanned their exterior; and, then, as her cheek grew pale, and a tear expressed her disappointment, Mortimer exclaimed, "Still no answer, Maria!"

"But too convincing a one, dear Mortimer,

replied she sorrowfully, as she put the identical letter she had written to her husband, ten days before, into his hand.

The words “returned letter—cannot be found” traced on the cover in red ink, immediately satisfied him that her words were but too true ; and his father’s fears, he saw, were not without foundation. “And is this your reward for your patience and suffering, my poor sister ? ” he said, as he pointed the obnoxious words out to his father. “By heavens ! it is a sorry termination to your hopes : perhaps, however, you know of some other place where he may be found.”

“No, indeed, dear Mortimer,” replied Mrs. Hamilton; as the tears rolled down her cheeks, “I do not : I wrote to Merton some time since, and learnt, from Sophia Hamilton, that he was not there. I judged he was in Scotland, only because I learnt he left London by the Edinburgh mail.”

“When did you ascertain that, Maria ? ” said lord Fitz Eustace. “You did not mention it before.”

“Only a few days before your arrival, my

lord ; until then, I thought he was in town. Do not look so angry, Mortimer :" she continued, turning to him, " he may be ill, and incapable of writing to me, as I said before, or even suffering from the effects of an accident. I know, if any thing had happened to him, he would not tell me. He is so careless with his gun, I have heard, that I always dread the consequences of his shooting excursions."

" Is it probable he may be so engaged ? " enquired Mortimer eagerly.

" Yes ;" replied his sister, with a look of embarrassment, however, which plainly indicated that her thoughts and words but ill agreed together ; and that the supposition was the offspring of a feeling similar to that which prompts the drowning wretch to catch at a straw for safety ; for she did not believe it likely to prove true.

Anxious to allay the indignation evinced by Mortimer, she encouraged the idea ; but, in so doing, she raised his desire for elucidating the occasion of Hamilton's absence. Young Delmar's generous disposition could not endure the idea of having judged unworthily

of an innocent man, and he knew that the opinion he then entertained of him, in the uncertainty of the period, was any thing but satisfactory to himself, or advantageous to Charles. His resolution was, therefore, instantly taken, and he rejoined, in a tone of determination, " If such be the case, Maria, which I very much doubt if you credit, and which I fairly own I do not—if such, I say, be the case, it is due both to your husband, and ourselves, to take every means in our power to remove those suspicions which cannot fail to be caused by all that has occurred."

" You are ever anxious to do any thing for me, Mortimer; but—"

She hesitated, and he said, " But, Maria, your fear for Hamilton's health is counterbalanced by that of discovering the truth of such suspicions. Nay, my own sister;" he added tenderly, seeing she appeared greatly distressed, " do not let me make you unhappy; there may not be any occasion, but you must permit me to learn, if possible, where this truant is. I assure you I will be so careful

that, if advisable, he shall never discover we have even made an enquiry for him."

" You used not to be so liable to take alarm," replied Maria reproachfully.

" I am so only on your account ; for, if I could procure his proper direction, you might write and satisfy yourself of his being well."

" I really think," said lord Fitz Eustace, " such a proceeding will be judicious, since I intend to return to Dublin shortly ; and I would gladly see you together before I go. Come, my dear, I am sure Mortimer will not do more or less than you desire ; and, I think, you ought certainly to write to him."

" Since such is my father's advice, Mortimer," said Mrs. Hamilton hesitatingly, " I will consent to your proposal : but, I entreat you not to act upon anything you may discover."

" Rely upon my discretion, dear Maria, on that head. But think over the business before you put it into my hands ; and give me my final orders to-night. I see the carriage is already at the door now."

Mrs. Hamilton rose to prepare for her drive, and Delmar, as he waited to attend her, con-

gratulated himself on the prospect of sifting this business, which, in his eyes, was attended with many unpleasant circumstances. No notice was taken of the subject the rest of the day. Maria seemed more out of spirits than usual, and her brother, if possible, more attentive. The evening was soon gone, and, as the young relations parted for the night, Mortimer looked the question he was unwilling again to urge, as he felt she was wounded by his suspicions. With a calmness he had not anticipated, she said, "I will give you leave, Mortimer, to procure Charles's address, if you can; but nothing more."

"I am happy you have so determined, Maria—since, I fear, had your commands been otherwise, I should have been rebel enough to do what I now purpose, for my own satisfaction."

"Then, my concession is of no avail."

"Oh yes, it is, Maria. I shall work with ten times more pleasure for you than myself." She pressed his hand, and, without another word, they separated.

The coach conveyed our friend Delmar, in the course of the next day, to London; and he

rigorously began his investigation, visiting Ibbotson's first, where his enquiries met with the same result as those of his sister, a fortnight before. As he turned over the letters addressed to Mr. Hamilton, his attention was attracted by the same writing which had been the object of Maria's surprise ; for an instant he attentively scrutinised it, as it lay upon the table, then took it up and narrowly observed each word and letter ; seemingly, however, without deriving any benefit, for he laid it down again thoughtfully, and continued to look at the others. When he had satisfied himself, he asked the waiter, in a tone of indifference, " who had brought that letter ? " for, having no post-mark, he was convinced it had been left by a private hand. The answer he received disappointed him, for it conveyed no assistance for his end in view ; and Mortimer, turning on his heel, left Vere-street, equally far from the truth, and certainly more uneasy than he had entered it. He called at various other places unsuccessfully in quest of his object, until, vexed and fatigued, he at length returned to the hotel,

where he intended to sleep, and, having taken a solitary dinner, during which he considered the operations for the morning, he went to the Haymarket to while away the evening.

The sun was just beginning to pierce the dense fog, which hung over the city like a huge night cap, when he again sallied forth; and, with a hasty step, and business looking face, began to thread the mazes of the vast Metropolis. His ill success of the previous day had rather increased, than diminished, his ardour; and it was seldom, indeed, that he did not execute any thing on which he had once made up his mind. A bright thought had struck him the evening before, while deeply ruminating on the best means of obtaining his purpose, which he was determined to put in practice without delay. It was that of enquiring for Hamilton at his Bankers, thinking it probable they must know where he might be found. Lombard Street was soon reached, and he quickly entered the house on which his hopes depended, and made his business known. The person he addressed himself to, professed utter ignorance on the subject, but, after in-

terrogating another young man, he learnt that, if he would wait a few minutes, it could be procured from one of the partners. To this, it will readily be believed, Delmar consented, and he spent some minutes in a state of uneasiness, fearing, now that he thought he had succeeded in his search, to learn that the opinion he had reason to form might be corroborated ; yet impatiently, though silently, finding fault with his messenger for his tardy return. After a short time, which to Mortimer seemed everlasting, he made his appearance, and, placing a card in his hand, said, "This, Sir, is the address sent us by Mr. Hamilton a short time ago, and to whom we accordingly wrote under cover to that person."

Delmar took it eagerly, rapidly glanced over the words inscribed, and then turning deathly pale, uttered the single exclamation, "Hah!" in a tone of surprise, mingled with indignation, as he strode to the door. In a moment he was in the street, where, instantly hailing a cab, he ordered it to the Green Man, in Oxford Street, and there mounted a Henley coach, preserving throughout a look of sternness and inflexibility,

boding no good to the object by which his anger had been called forth, and a disposition, though unimportant to strangers, still sufficient to deter any one from volunteering conversation, which he felt neither able nor willing to support.

CHAPTER XVII.

Fate steals along with silent tread,
Found oft'nest in what least we dread,
Frowns in the storm with angry brow,
But in the sunshine strikes the blow.

COWPER.

We must, with the license permitted to the author, compress the events of months, as well as leap lightly over a lapse of years. Our friends must be so kind as to take a similar hop, skip, and jump, and, without reverting to the space which intervenes, turn their thoughts upon Mrs. Hargrave. They must, however, suppose a year and a half to have made a change in our village flower; not that her beauty was less dazzling, or her happiness impaired. No! but she was a mother! That change, that happy change, had been wrought.

She had presented her doting husband with a pledge of her love! What young mother will not subscribe to the emotions of thrilling delight, of exquisite joy, conveyed by seeing their first, their only child, pressed in the manly arms of its father! How frequently does she not repeat the grateful appellation of mother, to herself, as the unconscious infant reposes beside her; or picture a thousand pleasures from its nurture! She thinks not of the cares, the anxieties, every succeeding month will bring with it, or the possibility of the lovely, the fostered floweret being nipped in the bud. She is alive only to the happiness of her novel situation, and thinks herself the proudest, the most favored wife and mother in existence.

Such was Ellen Hargrave, on the birth of her little girl, about fifteen months after her marriage, at which time, if anything had been wanting to complete her felicity, it was this event; for Hargrave was as desirous as herself for a child, and, though she had wished a boy, that trifling disappointment was soon forgotten, when she found that Hargrave appeared rather gratified, than otherwise, at a circum-

stance which she had feared would be a source of regret to him.

No sooner was she in a state of convalescence, than Mr. Vernon reminded her husband of his promise to acknowledge his marriage, as soon as this event had taken place ; and, to his great surprise, was told, by Hargrave, that had he had a boy, he would, most assuredly, have done so, but, as it was, he hoped his Ellen would have no objection still to defer the disclosure for awhile.

To this, Mr. Vernon had expressed his unqualified disapprobation. "I feel I am growing very old," he urged, "and should I be taken away, where is my child to look for a home, which you refuse to accord her now ? How am I to believe you will then do what my arguments fail in effecting ? "

" Believe, Sir," replied Hargrave, " my intention of discovering my union, as soon as circumstances will permit, by the love I bear her—by the oath I have taken ! Yet," he added, " if you and Ellen still distrust me, every selfish consideration shall be laid aside, and I will instantly present her to my uncle."

Upon hearing this, Mrs. Hargrave declared her wish to wait her husband's pleasure and time. She had no fears for his faith, while a thousand were called forth at the idea of forcing him prematurely to introduce her to the world, expressing herself so perfectly happy that she dreaded the effects of the slightest change; and, as Hargrave encouraged her to hope a few months would put an end to the concealment, she entreated Mr. Vernon to comply. Thus pressed, what could the Rector do? Nothing! therefore, he tacitly consented to what, indeed, he could not prevent, and again the subject was hushed for a time. Hargrave continued to prolong his stay from week to week, and day to day; the child grew, and became more engaging daily, and Mr. Vernon, although he felt a natural decay, was free from actual illness, and continued to participate in the halo of happiness and peace which appeared to radiate around his latter days.

Such hours of uninterrupted bliss are few and fleeting, they appear scarcely fit for this world of care and sorrow, and are seen only

at intervals, when they must ever create a feeling of alarm, from their being often the for-runners of some evil, which necessarily falls the heavier from the inequality of its victims to support it. Such must at least convey a feeling of insecurity to the contemplative mind, though to the unsophisticated Mrs. Hargrave, it brought no sensation of the kind. Not so her husband: with respect to him, it might truly be said, "And coming events cast their shadows before." For a day or two an unaccountable weight had preyed upon his spirits, attributable, however, to his purpose of leaving Claybrook for a time, and his anticipations of being again importuned to take his wife with him. This intended departure he delayed announcing, until unforeseen events wholly precluded the possibility of his doing so.

The little family party were congregated one morning in the parlour, to which our readers are no strangers, and where no material change had taken place, if we except the introduction of a few articles of furniture, such as a rose-wood desk, and accompanying table, and small, though elegant, book-cases arranged

against the wall. Mr. Vernon was engaged in perusing Mant's Bible, which lay open on the table, whence his eye turned ever and anon, with a smile, on Ellen, as she sat on the sofa, gently balancing her infant. Its soft breathing told how calmly it slept, and after awhile the young mother looked up with a smile at her successful endeavours to lull it to repose. Hargrave was leaning against the window, with his eyes fixed gloomily upon her, and his forbidding frown, meeting her bright sunny smile, in a moment, dispelled her satisfaction. "Dearest," she said reproachfully, "why that look?"

"You may well ask that question, my Ellen, when I have every reason to be cheerful in your society. Bah! away with melancholy," he continued gaily, "it is not fit for so happy a spot as this: come, Ellen, let me see you smile again." As he said these words, he imprinted a warm kiss on her fair brow, and was rewarded by a look of love—a smile of ineffable sweetness—his last from one whom he loved to distraction, notwithstanding his numerous and grievous faults.

Hargrave was still bending over his innocent wife and infant, tasting one of the sweetest portions of enjoyment from the cup of life which had ever fallen to his lot, when the attention of all was excited by a chariot and four, driving quickly past. A voice was heard giving orders in the loud tone of authority, the carriage stopped, and in a time, as short as that consumed in the relation, a young man, about six-and-twenty, alighted, followed by a tall elegant female, whom he supported up the parsonage garden.

The approach of these two visitors caused a dreadful revulsion in this abode of domestic peace. Ellen had just laid her child on the sofa, and advanced to where Hargrave stood at the window, when he exclaimed, as he threw one arm round her slight figure, and an ashy paleness overspread his countenance, "Good God!! what will become of us? I am lost! All is discovered!"

A scream escaped the terrified Mrs. Hargrave, as these words of direful import struck upon her ear, and she recognized, in the stranger, one she had known in days gone

by. Without knowing why, she clung wildly to her protector, who pressed her convulsively to his breast. These incoherent words had scarcely passed his lips, when the door of the room was flung open, and Mortimer Delmar rushed forward. "Villain!" he said, in a voice of thunder, "what do you here?"

"He guards his wife, sir," replied the rector, coming forward, and speaking in tones of violent agitation, caused by this sudden irruption.

"Wife!" repeated the intruder, at the same time casting a look of pity and anger upon the unfortunate Ellen: "would to heaven she were a wife!" He spoke in a tone of deep feeling, and continued, as he laid an iron hand on the arm of the poor girl, and strove to draw her away from her betrayer, "Hamilton, I charge you, as you value your soul, to relinquish this unhappy victim of your crimes."

"Oh! Charles, Charles!" exclaimed Mrs. Hamilton, in accents of the deepest distress and agony: "what have I done to deserve this treatment? how have I merited to be thus abandoned, thus degraded?"

In vain the justly accused man strove to find words to reply ; his tongue, as well as his limbs, seemed paralysed, as the conviction of his dreadful situation crossed his mind. He stared fearfully upon his companions, while his unconsciously relaxed grasp enabled Delmar to extricate Ellen from his arms, whom he placed, in a bewildered state, on a chair ; then, taking hold of Hamilton with a force which recalled the latter partly to his senses, while he gave him a look, beneath which he quailed, he said, in a deep voice, " Know you, miserable man, that you have married two sisters ? and that a brother's hand shall revenge both in one ? "

" Married ! " repeated Charles, speaking with difficulty ; " Ellen is not my wife."

" Hargrave, dear, dear, Hargrave ! " shrieked the discarded creature, starting up and again endeavouring to throw herself into his arms, from which Mortimer, however, prevented her ; " what have you said ? "

" The truth, Ellen," said he vehemently.

" And my child ! " she pursued, throwing

herself frantically on her knees beside the sofa, and covering the infant with kisses.

"Is a bastard!" answered Hargrave (or, more properly speaking, Hamilton), in the hollow voice of agony, sinking on a seat. Ellen heard no more, a cry of distress rung round the apartment, and she lay convulsed and senseless on the floor.

The few moments which succeeded were passed in wild confusion, each acting as their feelings dictated, regardless of the cause which had drawn them together. The hands of Mortimer and Charles, which the former, at least, had never anticipated could be joined in peace, now united in sustaining the lovely being both so fondly loved. The bewildered old man loudly called for assistance; while Maria—the injured Maria, sought ineffectually to allay the cries of the frightened child, which, awakened by the noise, added its little voice to the general uproar. Delmar, with his usual promptitude, caused the mother and her baby to be removed, and placed under the care of Margaret, to whom he knew she might be

safely entrusted, desiring that medical advice might be procured, if such should be deemed necessary ; then, forcing Hamilton into another room, notwithstanding his attempts to follow the group which hovered round the screaming Ellen, the resolute, but unhappy, brother, having secured the door, turned with unnatural composure to his companion, and said, “There lies a heavy reckoning between us, Hamilton—such a one as rarely exists between fellow-men. The injuries of your legitimate wife first induced her brother to fathom the mystery of your frequent absences, and what a tissue of villainy has he not discovered ! Heaven and earth ! that I should be called upon to chastise a thing so vile makes me curse my birth.”

“Delmar,” shouted Charles, roused by the other’s contempt, and a perception of his desperate case, almost to frenzy, “Delmar, how dare you affirm I have wronged Maria ? I again repeat, Ellen is not my wife. A man’s follies are not crimes.”

“Miscreant !” retorted Mortimer passionately, “do you seek safety from the effects of your crime beneath a lie, as foul as mortal can

utter, but, it is useless to bandy words with so false a villain." His lip curled high as he continued, "But learn, however, that Ellen is equally the child of Lord Fitz Eustace, with Maria and myself, although the offspring of unlicensed love; and equally demands my interference. That you have profaned the rites of matrimony, I well know, since neither Mr. Vernon nor herself would receive your proposals without such form; besides, I saw the holy emblem of her union on a hand by far too pure to be tainted by your touch. Attempt not, therefore, to deny the charge, but prepare yourself to meet me in yonder church-yard, whence one of us must not return in life. Have you weapons?" Hamilton glared furiously around, but, making no answer, Mortimer continued, firmly, "Speak! have you pistols?"

"Yes," he replied, gloomily, pressing his hand on his fevered brow.

"And you will not fail me?"

"After words like yours, Delmar," returned Hamilton, haughtily, "my spirit brooks not such a question. Blood only shall wash

way their stain. The time is all you have to fix."

Mortimer drew out his watch, and, holding it up, said, deliberately, "One hour is all I will allow. I will take that opportunity of sending Maria to her father, and I recommend you to settle your worldly affairs, and ease your conscience."

"I can do no better than return the advice," replied Charles, who had now somewhat recovered the first shock of the discovery, and saw his only chance of escape was by effrontery. He struggled, therefore, to return Mortimer's withering look, as they parted, but was no sooner alone than he began to evince every sign of the most frightful despair. He bolted the door, and then dashed his clenched hand against his forehead with a force which made his sensos reel,—he rushed to and fro in the chamber for a few minutes, and then stood, statue like, in the middle of his course,—his pale, haggard countenance, and quivering lip, betokening his emotion. Presently, a wild scream from Ellen awoke him from his stupor, he gnashed his teeth, and

clasped his hands, until the blood flowed from under his nails. He then took a case of pistols from a closet, and, having seen that the contents were properly loaded, he sat down opposite a small clock, and fixed his eyes upon the slowly revolving hands. More than once he raised the weapons, smiling grimly, as he did so, until ten minutes were already gone of the time Delmar had specified. Charles then seized a pen, which lay in a standish beside him, and immediately began, with a trembling hand, to write; at which occupation we will leave him.

END OF VOL. I.

